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Abstract

Because teacher life in the context of the elementary school has been a relatively unexplored research issue, this research project sought to describe the life of teachers in the school elementary environment. The nature of teacher’s roles, expectations of teachers, and quality of teacher life in school were questioned and what emerged was a rich description of teachers’ school lives.

The researcher gathered data during the 2002 - 2003 school term. Ethnographic techniques were used to study 7 teachers as they experienced life in an elementary school. The data from semi-structured interviews, observational records, and other documents were analyzed and interpreted using grounded theory methods. The data were sorted and coded, and constant comparison means were used to explore emerging themes.

This study describes how teachers are integrally connected to relationships with their students, employers, and others in the profession who provide basic expectations. It also clarifies a picture of a myriad of less conspicuous stakeholders through roles that are relative to time and circumstance, and that are less obvious than the other three types of more traditional relationships. The inquiry into these roles led to emergent themes that were framed by in vivo comments and groupthink of the participants.

First, teachers felt they had to respond to the expectations of many stakeholders, and they worried that that they could not do all that was asked of them. The researcher was well into data collection and analysis when the first category emerged that served as a thematic frame. The data that focused on teachers’ desks provided a metaphorical opportunity. Teachers’ desks were used to house many artifacts that pertained to the teachers’ interactions with stakeholders. Hence the first major theme is titled: My Desk
Represents My Reality. Nested within the frame of the desk were categories that focused on time and people.

A second major theme that emerged from the data was that teachers often felt they had little or no control over the circumstances in which they found themselves and that often the pressures they experienced seemed to result from time demands. Hence, the second major theme is titled: *The Clocks are Controlled Downtown.*

A third major theme emerged from data that focused on the importance of relationships in teachers’ day-to-day activities. For the participants, caring for the needs of others was a high priority and a central concern, while their own needs seemed of secondary importance. It was suggested in the data, that in concentrating care on others, the caring itself became an additional pressure. Thus, the third major theme emerging from the data was titled: *It Only Matters if You Care.*

Those three themes were woven into an initial, substantive theory, *Choicepoints: An Emergent Theory of Teachers’ Lives in School.* The theory presents a fresh new look at how teachers live with stakeholder expectations and their own desire for quality in their lives. The theory suggests that as changes occur, ‘teacher care’ may have a powerful influence on teacher life.

Teachers as formal and informal leaders chose care for their stakeholders as a priority. In living through the caring role with others, teachers faced the consequences of their choices and the effects on their own quality of life. They were challenged to find balance in their lives. The researcher concluded with the suggestion that to transform school life of the multiplicities of tensions and to support teachers’ in thinking their lives together requires appreciative thoughtful leadership from all stakeholders.
Acknowledgements

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To the teachers with whom I worked, thank you. To the Participating Teachers, thank you for your professional integrity, sharing your experiences in support of this research, and your care for your stakeholders. To Sharon Fortin, teacher and auditor, thank you for the professional integrity with which you embraced the data, monitored the work, and presented suggestions.

To the Other people whose spirit I have relied upon, thank you for the depth of care and support that were my sources of strength and courage as I completed this thesis.

To all of you - your echoes, your prompts, and your laughter, have become part of my life. For that I thank you all!
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Theodor Roll and Freda Pahl, who taught me to value public education and teachers who dedicate their lives to this pursuit.
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Epigraph

We are fumbling around in education because we know so little about the future and do not bother to know enough about the past. Education is not only one of the greatest human enterprises in immediate planning, with parents, teachers, ‘educators,’ school administrators, and college presidents as its leaders. It is also a long-enduring process of cultural self-evolution. This process expresses itself through the minds of people who are interested in, and capable of, looking deeper into the nature, the needs and the aspirations of human beings than are most people. As long as the daily planning, doing, and structuring in education are constantly nourished by the wellsprings of the total cultural evolution, education and civilization are in a state of health; when the contact is cut they are sick and a crisis occurs. We live now in such a crisis. The degree of futile busy-ness constantly increases in proportion to the loss of a feeling for cultural depth and continuity.

CHAPTER 1: CONSIDERING TEACHERS' LIVES IN SCHOOL

The process of cultural self-evolution and looking deeply into human nature, needs, and aspirations are inherent in the work of teachers in schools. To maintain societal stability there is need for the facilitiation of cultural depth and continuity (Day, 2000; Noddings, 2004; UNESCO, 2000). At the macro level, Canadian society is living with the ripple effect of an international, intellectual, technological, and knowledge revolution. As a result of macro societal tensions, many challenges have surfaced in Alberta’s schools. At a micro level, of what consequence are the challenges when captured within the frame of a teacher’s life? The purpose of this chapter is to situate the lives of teachers contextually and methodologically within the research.

This work began as a curiosity about schools, as a personal quest to better understand the frustrations and anguish I experienced as an educator, a teacher, and assistant principal from 1990 to 2000. Despite the depth and breadth of previous teaching experiences, I found that the more complicated and demanding my roles, the more imperative it was to try to understand the bigger picture of education. I began the doctoral thinking of the paradox of education systems where teachers are mandated to embrace the ethic of care on behalf of their students, but the reciprocity of the care between teachers and others is not always understood, or perhaps just not valued as part of school life.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of conducting this research was to explore teacher life in an urban elementary public school. (The term teacher in this study refers to the personnel in a school who have been trained as teachers and may or may not hold formal leadership designations. This is based upon the researcher’s belief that, potentially, all teachers are
leaders and all leaders are teachers.) A mystique shrouds teacher life in schools, but paradoxically there are abundant media reports that expose societal influences on education and the teaching and learning of students. Society generally thinks of teachers as the people who are responsible to teach students, and that the life of a teacher is only connected to students and the classroom (Piddocke, Magsino, & Manley-Casimir, 1997).

At one level society acknowledges major trends in education and predicts the challenges to the work of teachers (Lowe, 2000). There seems to be an accepted universality in identifying and describing the resulting classroom pressures. At another level are issues that are less often the focus: overload, acceptance of groupthink (i.e., blind commitment when the group goes along uncritically with the leader or group), untapped competence, narrowness of roles, and failed reforms (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, 1998; Manzer, 1999) that are indicative of the complexity of individual teachers’ lives in school.

This study examined how teachers experienced life in school. Fundamental to the study was the assumption that a teacher's role is reflected in actions and relationships in daily school life. At an epistemological level, the value underlying this work was that a teacher knows some things about humankind, teaching, learning, curriculum, and citizenry; and a teacher is able to feel and express knowledge of personal practice (life). Therefore it was possible to examine a teacher’s roles for descriptive information.

My goal was to consider the qualities in school life that teachers experienced by emphasizing the qualities as characteristics that are common to human life (Kung & Schmidt, 1998; Saul, 2001), rather than as evaluating whether the quality of life was good or bad (as in the field of quality improvement). This was based on the premise that until one is able to understand the characteristics common to humankind, and the dynamic of
the human search for equilibrium in life, it is not possible to evaluate the quality of a human life. The chemist John Polanyi was quoted by Saul (2001) as saying, ‘It is equilibrium which makes life possible’ (p.13). During the search for equilibrium, “What is true for an atom or a force field is true for all of us. We express this through our desire for life, for life with others, through our engagement with the non-linear nature of progress” (Saul, 2001, p.318). The flow of the parts in a dynamic equilibrium represents a search for perfect balance in life. I came to this understanding after a prolonged period of reading and reflecting upon paradoxical expectations of teacher experiences.

The differentiation of quality as influenced externally versus internally occurred when I moved past the external perceptions of norms as presented in the literature and focused instead on the teachers’ perceptions of themselves. The following section contains a literature overview of the term quality of life (QoL), how it grew, and was generalized into a quality movement.

Starting Points in the Literature

Initially, the motivation for this study was simply to explore the quality of life in schools. Elementary school teachers in Alberta had faced many challenges from the early 1990's to 2004. Expectations of schools, school boards, and the role of the provincial government changed the ways in which people saw schools (ATA, 2000; MacKay & Flower, 1999; Portelli & Soloman, 2000). I learned that simultaneously in segments of society, concerns for health (Haas, 1999; Nefiodow, 1999) and environment (Hammad, 1992; Vendigot, 2001) led to increased interest in the quality of people’s lives both nationally and internationally, but local information was limited. The literature portrayed Canadian educators as grappling with changing expectations regarding the quality of
school life (Barlow & Clark, 2001) and the ambiguity resulting from trying to adapt to societal rhetoric about the meaning of the quality of life (QoL) (Taylor, 2001). Teachers were affected by societal expectations and were challenged to maintain the status quo because they were caught between traditional and contemporary tensions.

There were broad based indicators of public QoL that came from large organizations (Pembina Institute, 2001; UNESCO, 2000) and more specific definitions of the concept relative to specific groups such as multiply handicapped students (Baer, 1994). There was little information about the quality of lives of teachers in school. Furthermore, there was a lack of understanding of the multiplicity of roles elementary school teachers played as they lived-through the daily experiences of school (Piddocke et al., 1997) and existing challenges to their practice (Britzman, 1991; Clandinin, 1986; Levin, 1992; Schon, 1983). Most work was based upon studies of those who taught older students and were involved in teacher training programs (Britzman, 1991; Clandinin, 1986). Realizing the scarcity of information it seemed important to narrow the literature search to research on QoL.

**Quality of Life**

The term quality of life (QoL) is used in various ways. The term is used colloquially in reference to QoL as something to which people aspire, or something that currently exists, such as, “I have a fairly good QoL.” In the latter part of the 20th century some researchers began investigating the components of QoL and became convinced that general health, interconnectedness, and harmony between people and their environment were important (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Kohlberg, 1987;). In other cases, QoL was defined as *the full expression of life’s potentials, not just*
physical health (Vendegodt 1991). Integral to this definition was individual ability to make choices and to feel control over the environment. In essence QoL was determined by the gap between personal achievement and unmet needs and desires (Baer, 1994; Leftwich, 1984).

The term QoL became a household word for people around the world (Courchene, 2001). Generally speaking, attention to global information and technological agendas assigned schools the job of preparing future adults for the competitiveness and entrepreneurial spirit needed for survival in a global market. Rather than offering greater financial support for changing educational agendas, governments across the country cut educational funding. Policy makers demanded that schools focus on the basics of education, following accusations that schools were failing society (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Taylor, 2001). Schools were reorganized and new curriculum was developed to address changing agendas. There was an assumption that the quality of life in schools would not change.

Two Canadian organizations studied QoL in Canada. The Canadian Policy Research Network looked at what matters most to Canadians regarding the quality of their lives. The five most important factors in descending order of importance were: the health care system, education, the environment, the economy, and social programs (CPRN, 2002, p.28). The CPRN developed a report card based upon these factors to monitor life in Canada. Quality of education is one of seven education indicators included in the summary. A second report, Alberta's Sustainability Trends 2000 (The Pembina Institute, 2001), presents a view of the most important trends that are shaping the quality of lives in Alberta and the population's future well-being (QoL). Using Genuine Progress
Indicators rather than the Gross National Product, they identified the indicators of ‘real progress’ related to economic, social, and environmental well-being. Educational attainment was the only measure connected directly with education and it was presented as a personal-societal indicator of well-being. The overall importance of these studies is a desire to increase public awareness of QoL in Canada.

Given the above context, it seemed useful to think about QoL of teachers who had experienced drastic funding reductions, reorganization, and program changes during the last decades of the twentieth century.

*Quality in education.* Historical trends indicated increased public awareness of QoL as a goal to which people aspired. More recently there has been the endorsement of that goal by large organizations, and a validation of education as an important means to achieve that goal. Internationally, the work of UNESCO (2000) has been important in raising awareness of human QoL issues around the world and confirming education as a means for addressing those issues. The call from countries for a common framework for UN initiatives suggested a growing convergence of worldviews that democracy, development, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are all interdependent and mutually reinforcing (Kim, 1999). Education was thought to play a key role in understanding and achieving human rights and fundamental freedoms. There was and continues to be at the time of publication of this thesis, a prevailing belief that the provision of quality education for all will lead to improved QoL for all.

Quality education is a complex system embedded in a political, cultural, and economic context (UNESCO, 2000, p.4). For UNESCO (2000), quality education includes the following focuses: Learners who are healthy and well nourished, who are
ready to participate and learn, and are supported in learning by their families and communities. It includes environments that are healthy, safe, protective, and gender-sensitive, and that provide adequate resources and facilities. The curricula reflect the need for basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, skills for life; and knowledge in areas such as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention, and peace. It includes processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities. Finally, the UNESCO definition includes outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. This UNESCO (2000) work presents international guidelines for quality education that have become part of the global rhetoric and as such, has an effect on educational expectations around the world. The work implies that quality education leads to higher QoL and should be viewed as entitlement for all people (Wilkinson & Hébert (2001).

*Quality in school life.* In North America, the first studies of QoL in schools looked primarily for facts about life in schools (e.g., Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1965). For example, Johnson (1990) provided a framework which identified seven qualities to consider when examining life in schools: (a) physical features, such as safety and comfort, space and resources; (b) features of organizational structure such as authority, workload, specialization, autonomy, supervision, independence, and interaction; (c) sociological features, including roles, characteristics of clients and peers, status; (d) economic features of pay and benefits, incentives and rewards, and job security; (e) political features including voice in governance and equity; (f) cultural
features, the strength and supportiveness of the culture; and (g) psychological features pertaining to the meaningfulness of work and opportunities for learning and growth.

Features such as these are present in much of the literature on building positive school climate (e.g., Freiberg, 2000; Matheson, 2002) and they may be useful ways to describe specific school qualities. They do not however address the dynamic and developing characteristics that teachers experience in their daily lives at school. To gain clarity on the qualities that teachers experience closer scrutiny using qualitative methods seemed more useful for researcher purposes.

**Teachers’ Lives**

The literature search revealed few studies that addressed teachers’ perceptions of their lives in school. While much has been written about the importance of safe and caring schools (ATA, 2000, 1998), partnerships (Barlow & Clarke, 2001), and issues related to teachers’ work (ATA, 1993; CTF, 1976; King & Peart, 1992), these works tend to identify the issues rather than substantiate how teachers experience the issues. Similarly, there were many publications about spirituality (Salzberg, 1995), teacher transformation (Palmer, 1998, 2000), and hopefulness (Glazer, 1999), but these works tend to challenge the directions of our educational systems and address conflicts that affect teacher personal development, rather than discuss teachers’ experiences.

A national study of teachers in trouble (Piddocke et al., 1997) attempted to understand the moral and psychological disposition of teachers (their character) and the roles that they played in social situations (dramas). The authors used the term, Characters (with a capital C) to refer to social roles laden with moral values. Together with the persons occupying those roles, the Characters became examples of these values. In this
context, teachers were Characters who were expected to adhere to official definitions and to live in ways prescribed by expectation (Clandinin, 1986). To illustrate, not only was a teacher an employee who worked in a school, but also a professional guide for others. Although what this looked like varied between communities, generally speaking teachers were expected to serve as role models for other members of society. As professionals, teachers were thought to have special knowledge that outsiders may not recognize. They received a good deal of autonomy and were trusted to use personal knowledge to benefit their stakeholders (Piddocke et al., 1997). A breach of expectations meant the character of a professional could become an issue for society. Reciprocally, societal pressure could become an issue to the professional. However, it was not clear from the literature what effect societal expectations had on the QoL of the professional, which further encouraged the researcher’s intention to explore how teachers experienced societal expectations.

The norms of teaching. As Ayers (2001) points out, everyone seems to have a slightly different opinion about what teachers do in school. Insight into what Alberta’s teachers should do can be found in sources such as, the Teacher’s Code of Professional Conduct (ATA, 2002), where professional standards are outlined in relation to pupils, school authorities, colleagues, and the profession (ATA, 2002). Norms for teacher roles can be found in academic research such as, Teachers in Trouble (Piddocke, et al., 1997). Although the standards of conduct discussed in the literature apply to teachers’ lives in school, many teachers reported that they felt like their “work” was never done. This may have been because in school, a teacher's behavior was closely scrutinized and there was a carry over to out-of-school activities, that gave the impression that work happened 24 hours a day. The teacher was expected to be a person whose character justified trust by
parents and school authorities. The teacher was expected to exemplify a morality that justified society’s judgment of being fit to instruct the young. Typically the teacher's behavior out of school was considered relevant to these expectations.

Complying with norms and expectations can at times be confusing because the parameters of a teacher’s work are not always clear. For example, Bill 12, discussed in detail in the next section, states, “any employees on strike or locked out by their employer must immediately resume the duties of their employment without slowdown or diminution …” (Bill 12, 2002, p. 2). Striking teachers were ready to withdraw their voluntary services if ordered back to work, and controversy developed over whether that would constitute a diminution (Bill 12, 2002; ATA, 2002). Historically, teachers voluntarily led extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, or musical activities. There has been confusion in recent years over what constituted voluntary service, because in many schools some extracurricular programs were traditions and no longer considered optional. Bill 12 brought these concerns to the forefront and, to date, they have not been resolved. In this situation, the teacher as an exemplar of morality was faced with making choices about what was right and wrong behavior in a situation where the guidelines were fuzzy.

The above example illustrates how teachers are guided by behavioral norms and pressure to conform. The norms are the expectations, rules, and prescriptions about what must be done or ought to be done. Some norms are considered fundamental to the roles of teachers: those tied to teacher-student relationships, the role of teacher as an employee, and to the professional aspect of the teacher's role.
There also are unidentified roles (e.g., extra-curricular involvement), formed where the three other sets of roles overlap (Piddocke et al., 1997). The roles overlap when a teacher takes on more than one role, creating another, unidentified or invisible type of role. The unidentified roles may be related to tensions such as those associated with teacher withdrawal of voluntary services or other aspects of the current educational context.

_The teacher in society._ Different roles arise from additional demands a society or community makes on the teacher. For example, the social status the community ascribes to the teacher's role reflects the value the community placed upon teaching. Is the teacher primarily a respected member of the community, looked up to because of his or her knowledge and responsibility, or is the teacher merely regarded as an employee of the school? The answers to these questions influence the roles and expectations teachers experience, and the QoL they live. To recognize the teacher as a knower gives the teacher authority to consider other people as potentially less important. However, at the same time the teacher is an employee, paid by the community to do a certain job, which may be more (or less) important than the jobs of other employee. This creates the potential for role ambiguity. How did teachers live with these ambiguous and sometimes confusing expectations?

That question provided a lens for the current research. It was considered timely because of the many changes in funding, programs, and curriculum within Alberta's educational system. Cumulatively these changes had led to the downloading of increasing responsibilities on educators (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). Book titles such as _Contested Classrooms_ (Harrison & Kachur, 1999), _No More Teachers, No More Books_ (Robertson,
1998), and the *Erosion of Democracy in Education* (Portelli & Solomon, 2001) sent signals of continuing change, tension, and role confusion in education. Perhaps the most telling signs of change in education and school life were reflected in the teacher labor unrest that resulted in strikes, lobbies, and the government passing Bill 12 in the Alberta Legislature to curb such measures (ATA, 2002; Bill 12, 2002).

*A social drama.* In retrospect the label social drama (Piddocke, et al, 1997) could have been an appropriate term to describe the situation in Alberta’s educational system. The literature described earlier examined norms that guide and inform the role of teacher. When these norms are violated, conflicts arise. Conflicts are struggles within which participants attempt to re-enlist societal norms to foster resolution. Norms can be expressed as public opinions, laws, and sanctions of authority. Conflicts can be seen as social dramas that become an opportunity for players to affirm or revise the norms.

These conflicts can be interpreted from a variety of positions. For example, from a sociological perspective, Piddocke et al., (1997) saw this as occurring in four stages: (a) there is a breach of an important norm governing the relationship of those who have come into conflict, (b) a widening crisis threatens the breach of more relationships, (c) measures intended to stop the disturbance are brought into action by the leaders, and (d) there is a reintegration of the conflicting parties or recognition of the schism between them. The drama occurs over time with alliances forming and shifting as a result of transactions pertinent to the values and interests of the people involved. Bruner’s (1991) insights for understanding the narrative could have been used to interpret the conflicts from a psychological perspective. This would have provided a more ‘cognitive’ interpretation of recent developments in Alberta education. The developing story in
Alberta’s schools was consistent with both social drama and narrative insight. The following example illustrates an evolving social drama.

A series of particular events occurred from 2001 to 2004 that speak to social conflict, drama and narrative. The April 2001 provincial Budget included an unprecedented salary enhancement line that provided teachers with a 6% pay increase over 2 years. This was of particular relevance to teachers and school boards, who had historically been responsible for teacher salary negotiations. This was interpreted as a breach of an important norm between the provincial government and the local school board employees. In November 2001, Edmonton Public teachers voted 94% to take strike action, bringing media focus closer to individuals and their stories. The conflict widened and from December 2001 to February 2002, as numerous other teacher locals voted in favor of strike action. On February 21, 2002 the provincial cabinet ordered teachers in 22 striking jurisdictions back to work, in an attempt to prevent further disruption in the schools. Then, the ATA executive successfully applied to have the orders overturned by the provincial court. The response of the government was to create the Education Services Settlement Act, Bill 12, which received royal assent on March 14, 2002. Bill 12 was viewed by the ATA as imposing a highly restrictive form of binding arbitration, removing working condition clauses from collective agreements. The Government claimed Bill 12 introduced a process to enable school boards and the ATA to reach settlements. The legislation seemed to take on a life of its own, resulting in intense public interest and media awareness that led to pressure on all sides to resolve the issues. On April 19, 2002 the Government, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the ATA reached a good faith agreement on key issues, in effect, slowing the growing schism. An
Arbitration Tribunal reviewed the outstanding issues. Teachers returned to their schools and the government entered into a complex review process of education. The events are now part of Alberta's educational history. Within schools the cultural impact challenged individuals and collectives to explore the implications of the past events relative to their concerns about life in school. This example, based on recent events in Alberta, provides a context for the current study.

**Summary.** The current study began with a desire to know more about quality of life, quality of education, school life, teacher life, norms of teaching, and the teacher within a social drama. The quality of individual lives was thought to be less than desireable, even though Canadians had embraced the concept of QoL and it was seen as something to strive for. The literature related to teachers suggested there were challenges for educators to meet societal expectations, and to simultaneously understand QoL as it pertained to schools' desiring to provide quality education for all students (CBE, 1998).

Until I had completed this literature review, I did not really understand the significance of the following quotation: “Quality of life is an elusive concept, perhaps because its absence is often more apparent than its presence. Neither measuring nor explaining quality of life is straightforward ... (Robertson, 1993, p.1).” It became clearer that because QoL was elusive, research about teacher life would focus on the voices and descriptions made by teachers themselves. It was the researcher’s belief that teachers’ voices would convey their understandings of lives that sought equilibrium and harmony (Saul, 2001) in contrast to the societal backdrop that appeared to contradict the valuing of QoL for all of its citizens. It was time to narrow the focus further and concentrate on specific starting points for the research.
Starting Points for the Research

The starting points for the research were rooted in my acknowledgement of tensions (i.e., job pressures) as indicators of lessening quality of teacher life, and through study of the literature, developed into an appreciation of teacher search for balance and equilibrium. Three areas of influence, and possible sources of tension that guided the conceptualization of this study were the trends in public education, changing stakeholder expectations, and current knowledge of teacher life.

Public Education

At present public education still provides a basis for the formation and strengthening of Canadian democracy and as such, it is fundamental to the identity of all Canadian citizens (Manzer, 1999). Challenges to public education can be perceived as challenges to Canadian democracy. The quality of teacher life in school offered a timely study in light of criticism and unrest in Alberta's educational system that had been publicized in the media for over a decade (Bill 12, 2002; ATA, 2002; Interim Report of the Alberta Learning Commission, 2003; Taylor, 2001). A closer look revealed a multitude of groups and individuals with a stake in public education. The term, *stakeholder,* is frequently used by the Alberta government to refer to groups who are perceived to have a vested interest in education. The term also reflects the corporate language that became pervasive in the province during the 1990's (Taylor, 2001). After more than a decade, and much posturing by the stakeholders, the educational unrest in Alberta continued to build.
Stakeholder Expectations

Academic literature was clear that teachers' roles were primarily related to their relationships with students, their employers, and their profession (Piddocke, et al., 1997). What was less clear was the dynamic between these roles, adding other dimensions to lives that appeared straightforward at first glance (Matheson, 2002). For example, the experienced principal who confided in me that she and her administrative team had roughly calculated that on any given school day there were between 20 and 30,000 stakeholders who would have the right to call or visit the school and expect/demand to talk to her. I wondered about the implications of her statement.

The potential vulnerability of teachers and school leaders was reflected in the acknowledgement of the extent of the relationships, regardless of the complexities they entailed. It was also indicative of the kinds of challenges teachers faced from the early 1990's, as expectations of schools, school boards, the provincial government, and society in general worked to reform Alberta’s educational system (ATA, 2000; MacKay & Flower, 1999; Portelli & Solomon, 2001). Teachers’ lives were governed formally by legislation, such as the Professional Code of Conduct, and informally through culturally perpetuated myths and assumptions of the public. There was a common perception of public schools and teachers being in crisis.

Educators were left to grapple with exponentially increasing expectations regarding the quality of school life for their students (Barlow & Clark, 2001) and the ambiguity resulting from trying to adapt life in schools to societal rhetoric about quality of life (Taylor, 2001). The school lives of teachers, affected by societal expectations were challenged to accommodate society (Osborne, 1991, 1996; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni,
1994; Wheatley, 2001). Was it possible that teachers struggled to do their work as they see it should be done, and instead think about the views of other stakeholders first (Britzman, 1991; Palmer, 1998)? How did teachers and schools consider societal expectations, and stay true to their own desire for quality in their work lives? The aim of the present research was to bring greater understanding to the less visible part of teachers' lives, where there were dynamic relationships between teachers and their students, employers, and their profession.

**Knowledge of Teacher Life**

What emerged from my literature review was an understanding that teacher life in Canadian schools had received little attention before the 1990's. Prior research published in Europe and the United States gained momentum for its attention to life in school and quality of life in society. For example, studies of school life generated by Waller (1965), Jackson (1968), Lortie (1975), and Johnson (1990) were simply generalized to a Canadian context.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation studied trends in the Canadian educational system of the early 1990's. One study of the work and quality of life of teachers (King & Peart, 1992) acknowledged pressures that included the following: provincial testing and the development of national standards; the introduction of cooperative learning (in contrast to measurement using common learning outcomes); funding reductions in education, health, and the social services; and the integration of students with special needs into regular classes; and major restructuring leading to increased expectations of teachers. This was a landmark study because it presented a comprehensive analysis of the teaching profession and the quality of life of Canadian teachers. A follow-up study
examining the nature of the internally segregated profession (CTF, 1993, p.3) looked at
gender gaps, women’s work, and their quality of life in schools. This study contributed to
societal awareness of issues related to equity, violence, harassment, and stress, as they
pertained to a profession where the majority of people were/were women.

More recently, the ATA published studies about the increases in teachers’
workloads and current teaching and learning conditions in Alberta’s schools (ATA, 2002;
ATA, 2003). These publications, which focused on teaching and learning conditions in
Alberta’s schools, specifically described the following as factors affecting class size and
composition: curriculum changes, teaching resources, professional development, funding
issues, rural/urban inequities, physical environment; social contexts of teaching and
learning; teachers and teaching; provincial achievement testing; and interconnections.
Cumulatively the ATA publications supported my research interest in teachers’ lives as
they described the work of Canadian teachers, but did not elaborate individual
perspectives or contexts.

How the lives of women who teach in schools changed in the last decades became
a topic of interest nationally and internationally (Michaels, 2002; Noddings, 1998, 2003;
Reynolds, 2002). In Alberta, literature highlighted a growing trend towards women
holding part time positions, lower administrative positions, and often being torn between
family and work obligations (Young, 2002). These sources also asserted that there were
few studies available that described women who were teachers and their lives in schools
(Reynolds, 2002; Young, 2002). The contemporary voices of experienced elementary
teachers, as heard in my doctoral study, provided understandings to update, extend, and
enrich the work described thus far.
The Research Question

A composite picture of teacher life in school emerged from the literature review. Teachers were assumed by the public to be primarily engaged in teaching students, acting as employees, and as professionals. This applied to all school based professionals, although variation was expected between classroom teachers and those who had formal leadership designations, such as, the principal, assistant principal, and vice principal. For example, principals were more involved in school board related roles (e.g., employer) than teachers whose major role was in the classroom with students. Stakeholders expected teachers to enrich student learning and enhance their future success as adults. Having reached this point in my studying I realized it would be appropriate to consider the phenomenon of teacher life in school in ways that allowed depth and breadth of interpretation (of obvious and hidden roles) of teachers’ school lives.

This research was built upon the following premises: If educational stakeholders had expectations of a teacher, and if these expectations influenced a teacher’s roles, the expectations could also influence a teacher’s personal quality of life in school. The greater the expectations the greater the possible influence on quality of life in school. Based upon that reasoning, I asked the question: *How do teachers consider societal expectations as well as their desire for quality in their lives in school?* This question is considered in detail in Chapter 2, and the research exploration is discussed briefly below.

Methodological Framework

Qualitative Research

This qualitative study explored how teachers (all professionals with teacher training) saw their lives in school, as described through their perceptions of their roles
and their quality of life. Data were collected between September 2002 and June 2003. Observations and interviews were used with the intention of possibly using other documents (i.e., daily and long range school plans) to explore how teachers saw their roles, their preferred roles, and other peoples' expectations.

*The Role of the Researcher*

In the school, the staff welcomed me as a university student (and long time educator) who was interested in their school. It was my role as the researcher to capture the interplay between the relevant conditions and the consequences of the participants’ actions. As recommended in the literature on qualitative research, I was sufficiently familiar with the participants and the school culture to understand their perspectives. The role I created was positioned between strangeness that avoided over-rapport and a familiarity that grasped the perspectives of people in the situation (Seale, 1998, p.226). As I explain in Chapter 2, my research approach was to collect documentation of relevance to teachers’ school roles over the span of a school year. As a researcher I focussed on the phenomenon of the teachers’ lives in school.

My goal during September and October was to attend weekly staff meetings (60 minutes long), interview each participant twice (interviews were 45-60 minutes long), observe each teacher in an instructional situation (for 45-60 minutes), and collect a variety of artifacts. The sequence of events was to be repeated in January and February 2003. All interviews were taped, transcribed and then, along with other field notes and documents, examined for emergent themes. In June 2003, I met with each participant to verify my interpretations and invite comments.
A Grounded Theory Approach

I chose to apply a grounded theory approach in the study. Grounded theory approaches are used to allow conceptual categories of information to emerge from the data. As the data are systematically interpreted, increasingly abstract categories and their properties and dimensions may form core categories that lead to the development of a theory. When a theory does begin to emerge it is *grounded* in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

There are many variations in the work of grounded theory researchers. In this study the researcher was hoping to enrich current understanding of teacher life, but was not consciously striving to ‘discover a theory’. This approach was consistent with the grounded theory approach of Corbin & Strauss (1990), who emphasize that the use of grounded theory methods may or may not result in the discovery of a theory. The methods used in the current study allowed thematic categories to evolve from the data, however it was unexpected when the core categories of themes began to converge to form the beginning of a substantive theory. This is a different approach than beginning research with the intent to build theory. Campbell’s doctoral thesis is an example of a researcher who applied the strategies of Glaser & Strauss (1999) in order to specifically develop and test her Model of Care-Empowering Education (Campbell, 2001). However, the current research was more open ended. Grounded theory procedures are thought to be scientifically based, regardless of the researcher’s purpose for using them.

Procedures for grounded theory. There are a number of considerations to ensure qualitative research will be viable scientifically. As Corbin & Strauss (1990) emphasize,
there are scientific canons and procedures that are applied in qualitative research. This study used the following guidelines.

The data were sorted and classified on an on-going basis, as the data collection and the analysis are interrelated processes. Initial data were examined for relevant issues to be incorporated into the next data collection. Actions and events were considered as potential indicators of the phenomenon and were given conceptual labels. Concepts that were related to the phenomenon were then grouped to form categories. The categories formed the cornerstones that led to the developing theory.

Sampling for the study was done on theoretical grounds, going to a school to study the lives of the teachers, by observing, listening, and gathering data about what they did. The representative concepts (not persons) were crucial. As incidents were noted they were compared against others for similarities and differences. Such constant comparisons also helped to guard against bias, because I was challenging the emergent concepts with fresh data. The data were examined for patterns and variations in order to understand where the patterns were and were not occurring.

Events that happened in the school were considered so that the phenomenon of teachers' school lives, and purposeful actions that occurred in response to the happenings, could be examined. Theoretical memos were written on an on-going basis to keep track of categories, properties, hypotheses, and generative questions that evolved from analyzing the data. Hypotheses about relationships among categories were developed and then verified during the research process. They were taken back to the participants to be checked and revised as necessary.
Coding was fundamental to the data analysis process. Coding was done in three stages. The first coding condensed the data into themes or categories as guided by the questions (i.e., actual lived roles, challenges, and ideal roles). A second coding was then used in a second pass through the data, so the researcher could organize the codes, develop links between them, and discover key analytic categories. During the third coding, the data and previous codes were selectively scanned for cases to illustrate the themes (Neuman, 2000). The categories were tested through repeatedly coding and comparing emergent findings (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2000).

Testing the concepts and their relationships with my colleagues added extra rigor to the process, and helped to control researcher bias. Broader social, economic, and political conditions were considered to show specific linkages between actions, conditions, or sequences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During the analyses, a triangulation of information from researcher observation, interviews, and artifacts facilitated corroboration of ideas from the different sources to enhance researcher understanding of both school life and the quality of school life (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The inter-textuality of the database (i.e., connections between artifacts and conversations) enriched the analysis and integrated representations of the data (Walker & Chaplin, 1997; Danesi & Perron, 1995; McAfee, 2004). The application of the grounded theory processes is discussed further in Chapter 2.

*Rationale for using grounded theory.* Why did I decide to use a grounded theory approach to the research? I believed that ideally teacher voices had to inform the thesis,
but how that occurred would also be influenced by practical considerations (i.e., time, money, participant availability, data processing). For all of the reasons stated above, I believed that with this approach I would be able to gather data within a school context as teachers worked, to clarify the situations in which the teachers worked, to monitor evolving changes in those situations, and to explore how they brought meaning to their day-to-day roles (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The result would be an integrated set of concepts in response to the research question that would lead toward a rich description of teacher life in school.

Cultural Contexts for the Research

The context for the research is situated between prevailing public views of teachers’ roles and expectations, the local school community, and the information shared by the participants. In order to insure anonymity to the school and the teacher participants, the names of the school and all participants have been changed.

Teachers’ Roles & Expectations

Teachers’ roles are generally thought to be somewhat static and based upon specific school/teaching assignments (Newton & Newton, 1992). In educational literature, teachers’ roles are often used to label job descriptions according to level (i.e., elementary, secondary), or subject area (i.e., Mathematics, Language Arts), or as part of a support system (i.e., resource, English as a second language). While performing roles, teachers make decisions about individual rights and freedoms, child welfare, and protection of privacy, to list a few. Regulation of teachers’ roles is entrenched in legal documents such as the following: The Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provisions of Basic Education in Alberta (Province of Alberta, 1997, Ministerial Order
#016/97), *The Declaration of Rights Responsibilities and Liabilities* (ATA, 2002), *The Teachers' Code of Professional Conduct* (ATA Member's Handbook, 2002), and *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation, Policy 4003 of the Calgary Board of Education* (1999). (A summary of four regulatory documents can be found in Appendix A.) Cumulatively, these documents provide a picture of traditional teaching that implicitly addresses role fulfillment and cultural expectations for what teachers do in accordance with cultural norms.

As referred to earlier, public expectations of teacher life see teachers as adhering to official definitions and living in prescribed roles teaching students, serving as employees who work in a school, and as professional guides for others (Piddocke, et al., 1997). One other category referring to more hidden roles is also suggested in the literature (Piddocke, et al., 1997). (Significant points from Piddocke, et al., are found in Appendix B.) In the current research, the notion of hidden categories was used initially in anticipation of 'other' miscellaneous roles that did not fit into the three more explicit categories.

Unlike the three traditionally accepted roles that appear somewhat static in nature, part of the allusiveness of the fourth category was connected to the dynamics involved with life in school. Four categories (student, employer, professional, and 'other') were adopted as a base for the interview questions that could potentially inform both static and dynamic aspects of teacher life in school (Tepperman & Rosenberg, 1991). Roles appear to be developed dynamically and according to an institution's official, pragmatic, and cultural needs. The needs of the institution's stakeholders are determined and addressed through assignment of formal and informal roles. Each school and each teacher possesses
unique qualities that personalize their approaches to role fulfillment. This information regarding teachers’ roles provides a contextual basis for a study of teacher life, and, in so doing, contributed to the study.

The School Community

The participating school contained kindergarten through grade 6 classes that served what the school system referred to as a walk-in community, and two bused suburban communities in one quadrant of a large Alberta city. The facility had a maximum capacity of 450 children. There were 27 teachers (24 females and 3 males), 18 were full time and 6 worked .8 or less. The original building was two-story and had been constructed with an open plan. There were 5 re-locatable classrooms directly integrated into the original facility. The building was adjacent to a local park. There were feeder junior high, high schools, and French immersion schools in the vicinity.

The school was in transition as a result of a declining local neighborhood population and rapid housing growth in the designated busing neighborhoods. Between June 2000 and September 2001, the school realized a net increase of 102 students. At the time of the research study, 18% of the population was from the local neighborhood and 82% from the bused neighborhoods. With this growth, the school was supporting a significant English as a Second Language population.

Suburban growth led to increased enrollment, and the introduction of busing and lunchroom programs. A strong historic culture had been sustained through these changes. The successful partnership of the walk-in and bussed communities had been intentionally nurtured and strengthened. ‘We Care’ was the language of the school. It pervaded all relationships within the school community and drove the work of the school. The ideals
of pride, hope, responsible citizens, success, respect, community, imagination, trust, and generosity formed a foundation for school activities. The ideals were embedded in community and staff celebrations. The school developed an atmosphere and structure that nurtured and promoted high standards for learning and a predisposition to continuous and collective inquiry in contemporary theory and practice. There was an on-going commitment to themes of the environment and responsible citizenship.

The Participating Teachers

The participating teachers volunteered after the research project was reviewed with the principal at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. After the granting of ethical clearance by the university and the school system, I attended a staff meeting at which the teaching staff was invited to participate. The project was explained and expectations for voluntary participation were discussed. Copies of the consent form and a summary of the project were distributed to everyone at the meeting and a collection box was placed in the office for those who volunteered.

Seven teachers volunteered to participate in the research. Each of the seven teachers had more than 5 years of teaching experience; two were part time, five full time; six were female and one male; four were classroom teachers with positions ranging from grades 1-6, two were administrators and one was a specialist. (Elementary schools in this jurisdiction were typically staffed with a majority of female teachers. The research school ratio of 8:1 female to male, and the 6:1 ratio in the study participants were considered typical of the system.) Although I initially suggested that three participants would be sufficient, I was thrilled with the enthusiastic response of the staff. The volunteers represented a proportional cross section of the total staff in terms of hours of employment
and gender (Young, 2002). It was also seen as advantageous to include two participants with formal leadership designations, because the data were to be processed collectively to provide a qualitative description of the phenomenon, teacher life in school, and the addition of formal leaders would provide a more complete perspective. Once I began regular visits to collect data, three other teachers offered to join the project. My response was that I would keep their names in case any of their colleagues wanted to discontinue involvement in the project.

Organization of the Thesis

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to introduce the research project. This overview included: the purpose of the study, starting points gathered from the literature, to start the research, the methodological framework for the project, and cultural contexts for the work. I provide an elaboration of the research process in Chapter 2, Exploration of Teachers’ Lives. The following three chapters (3 – 5) each describe a major theme that emerged from the study. The titles are as follows: Chapter 3, My Desk Represents My Reality; Chapter 4, Our Clocks are Controlled Downtown; and Chapter 5, It Only Matters if You Care. Rather than providing one literature review for the entire project, I weave relevant literature into each chapter. Chapter 6, Teachers’ Lives in School, concludes the thesis with a summary, an emergent theory, and final discussion regarding the research project.
CHAPTER 2: THE PROCESS OF EXPLORING TEACHERS’ LIVES

This research exploration of teachers’ lives stemmed from 15 years of work as a teacher and administrator in a large urban school system. These were difficult times for teachers. I wondered about the ambiguity and the paradoxical views of quality in relation to teaching and schools, particularly during years of system focus on quality learning processes and outcomes. The struggles of Alberta’s educators were still being vigorously enacted at the time of the study and they continued through the time of writing.

Experiences from my own personal biography undoubtedly influenced the research choices I made. For example, my experiences as a woman, a teacher, and an assistant principal influenced my perceptions of the school that I used in this research. I was aware that we shared common understandings regarding system policies and expectations. Such knowledge enriched the process and the final interpretations.

I was simultaneously aware of my lack of knowledge of the current perspectives. I had been away from the classroom for 4 years, and at the time of data collection I had been on leave from the system for 2 years. There were a series of significant events that impacted teachers directly and indirectly during that time. For example, the local school board continued to struggle to provide the expected quality of education known prior to the provincial funding cuts of the 1990’s. As the school board adjusted to less money, classroom conditions changed as class sizes grew and fewer teachers were hired. Disconcerted teachers and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) and other public stakeholders became more vocal about the crisis in education (ATA, 2002; Taylor, 2001). The district’s chief superintendent, the inspiration behind the Quality Learning Model for the school board, was fired unexpectedly (Michaels, 2002). Colleagues who had worked
closely with her, spoke confidentially of their feelings of vulnerability that they too could be replaced without prior warning. It was my assumption that many others in the system were feeling the same way. When I began my leave in the fall of 2000, I had been sensitized to diminishing conditions, but could only guess to where they might lead.

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teacher life, and to begin to theorize as to how and why teachers live as they do in schools. I felt qualitative research method (i.e., grounded theory) would be suited to uncovering meanings people assigned to their experiences and provide a compatible research guide in my exploration (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I hoped to move toward the development of theory generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed through the constant comparative method (Creswell, 1998, p. 98). In this chapter I describe: (a) aspects of the exploration that include the research question, interview questions, participant selection, and procedures to enter the field for the purposes of collecting and interpreting the data, (b) the story of the data (i.e., the description, analysis, and interpretations of the data) along with the data verification and trustworthiness, (c) data representations, and (d) concluding thoughts for the chapter.

The Exploration of Teachers’ Lives

The Research Question

My doctoral coursework confirmed earlier concerns regarding diminishing conditions in Canadian schools and it surprised me that little Canadian research inquired into teachers’ lives in schools. I was left wanting to understand how teachers considered societal expectations along with their own desire for quality in their lives in school. (The
word 'consider' was used as a verb in this study, meaning to live with perceived cultural expectations.

The Interview Questions

The following questions helped form participants' interviews, and the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data.

1. How do teachers see their roles in school?
2. What do teachers see as their roles?
3. What do teachers see as challenges to their roles?
4. What do teachers see as their preferred roles?
5. How do teachers live with other's expectations of their roles?
6. What does the term quality of life mean to teachers?

These questions formed the basis of a template for the semi-structured interviews, and were adhered to closely during Phase I interviews. Later in this chapter, I have described the data process and later modifications that were made to these questions.

Research Participants

The research participants were six women and one man, with ages ranging from 34–55. All were Caucasian. Of the seven people, four lived with partners and were raising school-aged children, one woman was a single parent who was raising three children, and one person lived alone. Participants had between 5 and 29 years of teaching experience. All of them had an education degree, two had a second undergraduate degree, and three had master's degrees. Two female participants were employed on a part time basis; the others held full time positions. Participants held positions as a grade 1/2 teacher (.8 FTE); a grade 3/4 teacher, two grade 5/6 teachers, one specialist (.5 FTE) for a K-3 team, the assistant principal (male) and the school principal (female). At the time of the study all participants had been in their current roles for at least 2 years. How the roles of the participants evolved through the year is discussed later.
Procedures to Enter the Field

Participants were invited to volunteer after almost a year of school visits and observations as a university student gathering information to complete course assignments. By that time the staff was accustomed to my presence at staff meetings. I continued visits during staff meetings after the school was approved as my research school. I was told that teachers wondered about my visits (Brent, June 2003) but they accepted my presence without question.

At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year I reviewed my research proposal with the principal. We planned that I would attend a staff meeting to explain the research and invite the teaching staff to participate. Permission to conduct the research was granted (see Appendix C) and by mid September I visited the designated school to find participants. Copies of the consent form and a summary of the project were distributed to everyone at the meeting. Volunteers were asked to put completed forms in a collection box by the sign-in book in the office (see Appendix D). Volunteers were contacted via email and telephone. The purpose and the scope of the study were reviewed and an appointment was set for an initial interview. Informed consent was discussed in detail at the beginning of the interview, with an emphasis on confidentiality and individual comfort with the plans. A template for the first informal interview is provided in Appendix E. Each participant was asked to select a pseudonym for the research. Other than staff meetings, all meetings were with individual teachers. Each participant was also promised the opportunity to review my interpretations from interview to interview, and again at the conclusion of the study, when I presented them with my preliminary findings.
The Story of the Data About Teachers’ Lives

Description of the Data

Data collection. As is seen in Figure I, the data were collected during the 2002–2003 school year. The triangle in this and subsequent Story of the Data figures stands for the data that were collected from October to November 2002 (Phase I), February to March 2003 (Phase II), and June 2003 (Phase III). The seven participants were interviewed. (See Appendix F for the teachers’ descriptions of their backgrounds.) Teachers were then observed as they taught language arts classes and administrators as they conducted staff meetings. These observation sessions were followed by 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews to clarify perspectives and negotiate understandings regarding teacher life within the individual’s teaching or administrative context. This interview-observe-interview process was repeated during Phase II. Phase III consisted of a final set of 30-45 minute individual interviews to share findings, invite comments or feedback regarding the findings, to bring closure to the work through clarification of previously unclear perceptions that either of us still had, and to thank each person for their participation in the research. In addition to the observations and interviews, documentation (i.e., lesson plans, photos of desks, school improvement plans) was gathered to provide other dimensions to the data.

Data gathering process. The process and procedures for gathering and handling data evolved throughout the term. During the first interviews the primary tool was the research questions listed at the beginning of this chapter. The interviews were taped and transcribed, and initial analysis begun to facilitate Phase II of the data collection. I found that as participants and I naturally moved from the format of semi-structured interviews
to more informal conversations, the sessions became more wide open and the role of the researcher became less of a participant observer and more of a collaborator.

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I also modified the six questions listed earlier. The sub-categories of questions were asked in Phase I interviews, but for some participants their responses were repeated in the second interview. Rather than gathering redundant information (i.e., those related to preferences, liking least & best, enablers & barriers), in Phase II the focus was on more unique aspects raised by individuals in their Phase I responses. As people’s roles changed through the year I looked more closely at the inter-dependence of roles and expectations.
During Phase III, I collapsed role related questions into questions regarding ‘role changes’, and one critical question of, “Has your role changed since I met with you last? If so, please describe the changes.” (See Appendix G for the letter requesting closure.)

Data collected during staff meetings consisted of agendas that listed topics and the individuals responsible for addressing the item. During the meetings I wrote notes regarding the responsibilities and the interactions of the participants within the greater staff context. The staff were used to me being there and saved me a chair, passed me the agenda, included me in staff comments, and trusted me as part of the group. The data collected during the staff meetings from September 2002 to June 2003 were thematically analyzed and compared along with findings of the other data sources to verify findings.

Written documents were used to inform and verify the findings as they evolved. I made notes during and after meetings, and gathered lesson plans, long range school/class plans, and school newsletters from all the participants. The notes I logged were reminders of my own perceptions related to the school and classroom events, staff meetings, and teacher comments. They were also helpful in reflecting on the meanings I was attaching to the observations. I later examined the data for tacit biases and assumptions that affected my interpretation. It was my intent to find sources of data that would enrich my understandings of teacher life. I became selective about documentary material. For example, lesson plans verified a teacher’s classroom role, but usually provided only brief notes about lessons. These plans included little about the life they were experiencing. As I explain later, I made the decision that focused conversations about the teachers’ desks could provide more significant information than attempting analysis of lesson plans. This
involved drawing or photographing a teacher's desks and then talking about artifacts that were on it. The phases and forms of data are summarized in Figure 2.

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Figure 2. A Summary of the Data Collection.

**Adequate evidence.** A central concern for rigor in qualitative research is evidentiary adequacy – that is, sufficient time in the field and an extensive body of evidence used as data (Creswell, 1998, p.301). In this study the data consisted of notes on 80 hours of interviews and meetings held between September and June. There were 35 hours of audiotapes for 28 interviews (four with each participant) that were transcribed by a highly qualified secretary. The final interviews in June 2003 were not taped but notes were written. In addition, I wrote field notes during staff meetings and classes, and reflective notes following my visits. Other documents were also gathered (i.e., the School Development Plan and newsletters). The data corpus consisted of over 800 pages of transcriptions, field notes, and documents. The interview data provided the primary source of information. Other documents clarified and enriched the cultural context and helped explain interview notes and transcripts. In the final analyses the triangulated data from observations, interviews, and print documents were used to verify the findings.

**Analysis of the Data**

The data described in the previous section were then subjected to analytic procedures based on researcher immersion in the data and repeated sorting, coding, and
comparing of emergent themes. The analyses of the data were done after each set of interviews to prepare for subsequent interviews. Analysis was also done on the completed collection of data to prepare on-going and final interpretations.

*Analytic process.* In the present study, transcripts were initially sorted and coded according to the research questions asked. This resulted in six basic chunks of information: teacher background, teachers’ roles in school, challenges to the roles, preferred roles, expectations of others, and quality of life. The six categories were named and color-coded to enable cross checking the meanings and accuracy of interpretation. The background information was set aside to use for setting the context for the research participants. The data analysis is symbolized in Figure 3 as a dynamic process that involves four methods. In the figure, double-headed arrows illustrate the flow of the process and shaded quadrilaterals the analyses. These symbols are used in all Story of the Data figures in the thesis.

*Four methods.* As is characteristic of a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), there were four methods in the on-going analysis of the data. These can be seen in Figure 3 and are elaborated in the following paragraphs. First, the data were sorted and coded into preliminary chunks of information. Second, the chunking followed by axial coding put the information back together to allow for the emergence of new connections. Third, selective coding helped to further refine core categories and signaled saturation of data. Fourth, the data, as they were sorted and chunked, put back together, and sorted again, was subjected to constant comparisons leading to the final description of the central phenomenon under study.
Figure 3. The Story of the Data: On-going Analysis

The first of three kinds of coding is open coding, which is, "The analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.101). Concepts, the central ideas in the data, are used to represent the phenomena under study. During analysis the concepts emerge and are sorted into categories. The properties of a category define it and give it meaning; the dimensions provide a range along which variations of the category can occur. Subcategories may emerge to further clarify a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Although the data had already been sorted and labeled for ease of management, the analysis of the transcripts began with open coding, i.e., a microanalysis of minute sections of the text made up of individual words, phrases, and sentences, followed by grouping the minute sections into meaningful chunks. This fracturing of the data led to the identification of 903 categories, their properties, and dimensions. The language of the participants frequently guided the identification of code and category labels by providing in vivo codes that could be systematically compared and contrasted to yield increasingly complex and inclusive categories. Other codes were derived from the literature and from my own background experience. The work of Corbin & Strauss (1998) guided these
activities. The open coding was also useful in data management. It helped limit my focus on the chunks rather than the whole of the data. The way in which the material was letter and color-coded allowed me to cross check and return to the original documents whenever it was necessary to question and/or confirm my understandings.

The analytic memos I wrote consisted of notes from observations of classes and staff meetings, questions for myself or participants, diagrams, and speculations about the data and the emerging theory. This information was included in the data corpus for analysis. An analytic journal was used to cross reference codes and emerging categories. Large wall charts and post-it notes were used to facilitate the arranging and rearranging of codes within categories. Charts and drawings were used also used to maintain a consistent frame of reference in constantly comparing the labels within and between sections of data. After each stage of analysis, I transferred the information into small charts to record the emerging themes.

As is seen in Figure 4, initial analysis during Phase I of the data collection involved sorting and coding of the questions in search of preliminary categories to represent my exploration of the phenomenon of teachers’ lives. The initial coding was used to help form follow-up interviews, but the 903 categories were too cumbersome to code further at that point. I completed the Phase II data collection, then sorted and coded the data during Phases I & II. From the 130 themes that emerged I was able to sort the data again and two additional categories emerged: time and people. All three categories were verified during subsequent analysis of the total data collected during Phases I, II, and III.
The second kind of coding is axial coding. Open coding followed by axial coding, helped me to put data back together in new ways (see Figure 5). “Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.123). The purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding, to help integrate structure with process. Although axial coding has a different purpose than open coding, the two are not necessarily sequential analytic steps (just as open coding is not distinct from labeling). The search is for categories around which the dimensions and properties of subcategories begin to form.

In this study, axial coding allowed the drawing of connections between categories and subcategories to guide my subsequent interviews. For example, during Phase I, connections were made between roles and expectations and the category of time. During Phase II, time was verified as a category and sub-categories of curriculum and money emerged as dimensions and properties.
Figure 5. A Sample Matrix Illustrating Axial Coding

The resulting matrices for these categories summarized the conditions for explaining why things occurred, and the strategies that eventually led to selective coding for the purpose of possible theory emergence. (The individual matrixes are interpreted in Chapter 3 in relation to desks, in Chapter 4 to time, and in Chapter 5 to people.)

The third type of coding is selective coding. “In open coding the researcher’s concern was with generating categories and their properties, and then looking to determine how categories vary dimensionally. Axial coding is used to systematically develop and link subcategories. Once the main categories are integrated it is possible to look for suggestions of a larger theoretical scheme. Strauss & Corbin (1998) define selective coding as, “The process of integrating and refining the theory” (p. 143).

The categories identified during the fall data collection became redundant during the winter (i.e., there were no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerging in the data.) With the data saturated, analysis was continued and closure to data collection occurred at the end of June. It was time to continue analyzing for the relationships between categories that were integrating into a larger more theoretical scheme.
To do the selective coding, I searched for confirming and disconfirming examples to further refine and develop categories. It became clear in Phase II that in addition to desks, time and people were central categorical themes. In Phase III, I focused on the following three central themes: (a) focus on aspirations related to roles and expectations, (b) time as it implied change strategies, and (c) peoples’ actions and relationships. The final stages of coding selectively integrated focus, time, and people and they were systematically related to the emergent core category of care.

The fourth method used in grounded theory is the process of constant comparison. On an on-going basis, the process of constant comparison of the data led to emergent categories to explore in further data collection. For example, the following themes from Phase I helped to shape the second round of interviews in Phase II: time, money, management, curriculum, support, fragmentation, people, pressure, relationships, and advocacy. I was aware of these as emerging patterns and wanted to explore them in later interviews. Codes and categories were sorted, then compared, and contrasted until saturated, or, until analysis produced no new codes or categories and when all of the data were accounted for in the central categories of focus, time, and people. These three categories appeared as central in relation to other categories. They occurred frequently in the data, and were inclusive or related to other categories. In the final analyses there seemed to be a connection to a more general but core category of care. The interpretive integration of the data was beginning to move toward theoretical power.

Interpretation of the Data

The interpretation and subsequent integration of the data occurred over many months. As with all phases of analysis, integration involves the analyst and the data.
After months of immersion in the data and the processing of cumulative information I began to recognize relationships, and see the links between the concepts. I began to clarify my perceptions of the more abstract core category of care and variations between the focus on the desk, time, people and the category of care (see Figure 6).

*Data integration.* The integration of the data allowed the researcher to move toward possible theory building. Concepts that reach the status of a category are abstractions that are no longer specific data of an individual and categories should be applicable to all cases. In this research the categories of focus, time, and people were abstracted from the data to represent facets of teachers' lives. Then the findings were integrated so they would represent a set of interrelated concepts not just a listing of themes. Later, the category of care emerged as central to interpretations of focus, time, and people. In the final stages of the research process a theory of teacher life in school began to form. The theoretical scheme was outlined as *Choicepoint: A Theory of Teacher Life in School.* The evolving understandings were verified by comparing them to the triangulated data and through consultation with others.

*Verification of Emergent Understandings*

Throughout the process of analyzing (to integrate emergent themes and later to build theory) the researcher relied on strategies for verification of emergent understandings. The interpretation of the descriptive categories was verified using constant comparative means between the three data sources (interviews, observations, and documents). This triangulation of the descriptive categories supported and qualified thematic interpretations (e.g., observational and documented data were used to verify findings in the interview data). Findings from Phase 1 were compared to findings from
Figure 6: The Story of the Data
Phase II, and then to Phase III, again in triangulation to support and qualify interpretations. This process eventually contributed to the saturation of the data.

Trustworthiness of Interpretations

Trustworthiness was achieved through ongoing consultation with participants, my own audit trail, and an external auditor. When discrepancies were noted, participants were consulted to clarify discrepant information. In finding comfortable categories, I would stop and actively search for less than obvious information. I saw this as essential to achieving rigor. My audit trail outlined the research process and the evolution of codes, categories, and theory (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1984). It consisted of chronological narrative entries of research activities, including pre-entry conceptualizations, entry into the field, interviews, group activities, transcription, initial coding efforts, analytic activities, and the exploration of a model for teacher life in school.

Finally, an external auditor, an experienced elementary educator/teacher, was asked to review a sample of transcripts and provide interpretations of the conversations. Where there was a difference of interpretation, we negotiated understandings to incorporate into the analyses. Later, as all of the data were analyzed she was again consulted to verify the interpretations. The work was verified through consultation with the participants, researcher cross referencing, and the assistance of an external auditor. The thoroughness of these procedures lent credibility to the trustworthiness of the research interpretations as they are presented in this thesis.

The analysis and interpretation of the data occurred simultaneously in a spiraling process marked by procedures of data collection and the representations of
interpretations. Each level of collection was marked by interpretations that led to the final integration of data and the suggestion of a theory of teacher life.

Representations of Interpretations

Thus far in Chapter 2, the goal has been to discuss the exploration of teachers’ live in school relative to the research questions, the participants, and the research process (i.e., the description, analysis, and interpretation of the data). As those research processes were being realized there were concurrent decisions allowing the emergence of themes and theoretical tendencies. Both were conceptualized and represented inter-textually using tables, matrices, and narrative forms. The themes and tendencies were considered together in a continual spiral; one related to the data, and one to conceptual representation.

*The Spiral of the Research Process*

The research process in the current study conformed to the contours of a spiral. This is a custom-built, often revised, and crafted portrayal. It is based upon the data analysis spiral used by other qualitative researchers to convey a sense of their work (Creswell, 1998; Huberman & Miles, 1994). Conceptual representations were formed for each aspect of the data process (e.g., collection, management, reading, describing, analyzing, interpreting). The representations were appropriate for the phase of the research and the level of data analysis (see Figure 7). Arriving at the representations required engagement in a process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. The spiraling began with the textual data and the photographs and ended with the account of the research.
The first loop of the spiral to begin the process was data management. At that point the data had been organized in computer files, folders, and binders. Besides organizing the information, the files were converted into meaningful chunks of information (e.g., coded words, sentences, paragraphs, and some entire stories). The chunking of the text units facilitated computer sorting and later manual analysis.

![Analytic Processes and Examples of Representations]

Following the organization and conversion of the data (for each of the three phases of data collection) it was important to gather an overall sense of the database. The transcripts were read several times, to become immersed in making sense of each entire transcript, before dividing it into chunks. It helped to write memos and notes during the initial stages of the database explorations. Looking over the field notes from observations, interview data, photographs, and other documents helped to look beyond
the specificity of the responses to the predetermined interview questions. A few categories of data (described in Chapter 2) began to emerge along with support for possibly portraying multiple perspectives.

The process just described consisted of moving from the reading and memoing loop of the spiral into the describing, analyzing, and interpreting loop. Here the formation of emergent categories represented the heart of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 1998) of teachers' lives. The thematic categories of desks, time, and people were chosen to represent teacher life. Interpretation of the themes involved making sense of the data by contrasting personal views to those of other people. In the final phase of the spiral the data was represented/accounted for in text, figures, and tables.

**Textual and Visual Representations**

With each loop of the spiral there were textual and visual representations. The processing of the data and the subsequent representations were influenced by the data provided by the teacher participants, the academic views provided by the field of visual culture, and understandings of theorists to support and develop the argument of the thesis. These acknowledgements grounded the research process that in the final interpretations led to the emergence of a possible theory of teacher life. Each is explained briefly below.

In Chapter 3, the metaphoric language of the teacher who said her desk represented her life, and in the end, her reality, provides an example of an *in vivo* term. The term was provided by a participant and used by the researcher as a representative lens for the study of teacher life (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Chapter 4, the researcher used the category of time that had emerged from the data. In the field of visual culture, groupthink is seen as a method to interpret culture (Janis, 1971; Danesi & Perron, 1999;
Walker & Chaplin, 1997). The category of the time was considered to be representative of teacher life because of the prevalence of 'time references' in the data. There are also theoretical representations in the thesis. The work of Nel Noddings (1992, 2003) provided theoretical grounding for the discussions of people and relationships in Chapter 5 and again in the Chapter 6 discussions of teachers and leadership. The researcher’s view of transformational leadership in Chapter 6, also drew from the theoretical work of Kenneth Leithwood and others (Campbell, 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2002). The analytic spiraling of the data process led to the integrated representations of teachers’ lives that are conveyed throughout the text of this thesis.

Concluding Thoughts

The method explained in this chapter is based upon the principles of grounded theory, and accordingly the data collection and analyses followed the scientific canons relevant to such qualitative research. The means selected and used to clarify participants’ understandings were as follows: (a) analysis of participants’ conversations and documents; (b) development of codes, categories, and themes inductively rather than imposing predetermined classifications on the data; (c) generating working hypotheses or assertions from the data; (d) assigning suitable forms to represent the integrated data.

The next four chapters focus on the details of the study that include the analyses and interpretations of specific segments of the data. As shown earlier in Figure 6, Phase I led to the analysis and interpretation of teachers’ desks. This is presented in Chapter 3, *My Desk Represents My Reality*. Phase II built on the previous theme’s interpretation and led in Chapter 4, *The Clocks Are Controlled Downtown*, to an exploration and description of teachers and time. Phase III also built on previous themes and led in Chapter 5, *It Only*
Matters if You Care, to the theme of relationships in school. A summary of the research and the conclusion are provided in Chapter 6 of the thesis.
CHAPTER 3: MY DESK REPRESENTS MY REALITY

This chapter provides a view of the complexities of teacher life in school by looking at a teacher’s desk as a metaphoric response to the research question, “How do teachers consider societal expectations as well as their own desire for quality in their lives in school?” To respond to the question I made the assumption that there are deep and broad inter-textual relationships between language and the person’s greater context (McAfee, 2004). More specifically, each teacher’s desk can serve as a metaphor for that teacher’s life. In borrowing the term ‘sign’ from the field of visual culture, I suggest that the teachers’ talk about their desks provided a viable way to connect to other more personal aspects of their lives in school.

This chapter begins with a description of the cultural context for the metaphor of teachers’ desks to represent their lives. The texts of the desks are presented next, followed by the story of the data about desks, then a discussion of this section of the research, and the chapter ends with the author’s concluding thoughts. This microanalysis of the desk data based on the teachers’ talk about artifacts provided focus for deepening research understanding of their roles, expectations, and lives. The interpretation suggested key aspects of life in and out of school, the realities of the artifacts, and teacher aspirations for quality in life in school.

Cultural Context for the Research

*Representations from Visual Culture*

As the analytic procedures were completed the forms of representation became increasingly abstract. In the case of the desks and the artifacts representations were drawn from the field of visual culture. Although quite a new area of study it is thought to be, “a
multi-dimensional enterprise formed as a consequence of borrowings from, a variety of disciplines and methodologies” (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p.1). The goal of the field is to form critical understandings, which can be achieved through a variety of approaches. For example, visual culture can be studied through the science of semiotics, the study of ‘signs,’ and is complicated by its very tradition and the jargon of a myriad of perspectives (Danesi & Perron, 1999; Hiebert, 2002). At a basic level, signs send messages to represent the world. Researchers search for the signs and draw meaning from them.

As a study of culture, this work about desks draws upon the notion of relationships between signs and their codes (see Figure 8). Culture is produced by the coherence of visual signs in over-arching systems that draw on disciplines such as, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and neuroscience that have similar objectives. The systems supply the signs, the specific codes in which they are organized structurally, and the texts make meaning possible to the members of a culture (Danesi & Perron, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Context</th>
<th>Types of Texts</th>
<th>Types of Codes</th>
<th>Types of Signs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Educational leadership</td>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>Language:</td>
<td>*Words</td>
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<td>School culture</td>
<td>*Objects</td>
<td>*Metaphors</td>
<td>Figures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers' lives</td>
<td>Paintings</td>
<td>*Groupthink</td>
<td>Symbols</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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Figure 8. Signifying Orders. Adapted from Danesi & Perron, 1999, p.93.

There are interconnections and commonalities between signs, codes, texts, and contexts of representational systems (Chaplin & Walker, 1997; Danesi & Perron, 1999; McAfee, 2004). In post-structural terms, Kristeva used inter-textuality, from the work of Bakhtin to demonstrate the relationships between texts (McAfee, 2004). One way to illustrate the connections between texts is with the dimensionality principle of semiotics
because it makes the interconnectedness among representations explicit (Danesi & Perron, 1999, p. 95). In this chapter there are connections between coded language of the participants and objects on their desks. Both forms provide texts that are used to represent teachers’ lives.

*The Teachers as Leaders*

When I began data collection I was frequently asked by the teachers, “Are you getting enough information?” This was followed by, “I feel so bad, because I am making life sound so simple. It’s not!” As I thought about the comments, I realized that there were other sources of information from which I could also draw data. The teachers saw themselves as leaders in the research school. I also viewed them as leaders and their comments to me were valuable for that reason, too. I was not surprised when they asked about my work because I was aware of school philosophy regarding leaderships as shared and negotiated. Teacher leadership was expected as a cultural norm.

I realized teacher documents (e.g., lesson plans), while useful to confirm specific aspects of teacher life related to students, were skeletal and were not enriching interview and observational data as anticipated. Lesson plans contained information about the content a teacher was to teach without additional details or descriptions. In the tradition of qualitative research (see Wolcott, 2001), I began asking: “How can I find out more about what teachers do and what others think they should do?” I asked myself what I was overlooking. Somewhere in between my understandings of the big picture of education and my personal practice were other teachers’ voices. Because teachers shared the culturally determined aspects of teaching and learning, their experiences were valuable to me in understandings teachers’ lives in the year 2002.
The Cultural Significance of the Desks

It did not take long to realize the cultural significance of the teachers’ desks for the research. I was aware that teachers were living with multiple layers of expectations, and complicated cultural dynamics that governed their behaviours and interactions. I wanted a means of obtaining richer information about these aspects of teachers’ lives. When I referred to my notes, I found several references to teachers’ trips to their desks (Researcher Notes, 10.10.02; 16.10.02; 22.10.02). I recalled the importance of a desk in my teaching experience and remembered noting all participants had desks for personal use. This was a turning point for me as I remembered how important a desk had always been to me as a teacher. I remembered feelings of devastation a number of years prior, when I moved to a different school and arrived with my baggage to find someone had removed the teachers’ desk. I had felt I didn’t belong in the school and that I wouldn’t until I had a desk to store my things. My preference was to have an organized desk, and I had in my mind justified my material organization as a way to make my life easier. I also learned that how I treated my desk was not the same as all teachers. Years earlier an astute teaching partner confided in me that she hoped the mountainous mess on her desk wouldn’t upset me, because she always knew where things were when she needed them. She added with a good-natured smile, besides, “I’m willing to put up with your peaceful music every morning, if you can put up with my desk being a mess!” So in a way it was very natural for me to pursue a more concrete representation of teacher life, to facilitate my need for teachers to feel they belonged as research participants, and reciprocally for me to connect with how they belonged in their school.
In my mind the desk was very significant and I saw potential in exploring teacher talk about their desks as a means of representing their lives in school. I decided to ask teachers to talk about their desks in the follow-up interviews. The desks became a vehicle of self-expression for all but one of the teachers who told me she preferred not to talk about her desk directly, because “there was too much there” (Carole, 22.10.03). The desks also served as a useful tool to better understanding the lives of the teachers, and in retrospect I think allowed more meaningful follow-up conversations that still centered around the initial questions, but in deeper and more focused ways. Once identified, the text of the teachers’ desks provided a symbolic lens through which to view the language of the teachers. This text provided the basis for the discussion of their lives in school.

The Text of the Desks

The information gathered about the teacher participants and their desks constituted the data for this chapter. A sample of the photographs of the desks can be seen in Appendix H. The participants are grouped as classroom teachers and, resource teacher and administrators.

Classroom Teachers

Beatrice talked enthusiastically about her desk (Interview, 30.10.03). At first we sat at a nearby worktable, where we could easily see the desk and its contents; later we just stood beside her desk so I would, as she said, “be able to really see things.” Beatrice was the first person to ask if I was collecting enough information and whether it was the kind I needed. The concern was repeated several times, at the end of our first interview and again in the hallway later. It was Beatrice who started me thinking about collecting other (possibly richer) forms of information about what teachers were experiencing in
school. After seeing her repeatedly visit her desk during an observation of her teaching, I asked her what she thought about my idea of having participants talk about their desks. Her response was, "What a terrific idea! I don’t have to clean it up do I?" I responded, "Now, why would you want to do that?" She laughed and said, "So it would look better."

Beatrice’s desk contained many sorted piles of materials, folders, and papers. The first items that she spoke about were: a pile of Gordon Corman books, a set of reading comprehension tests, a current copy of the daily newspaper, a bottle of juice and a water bottle, a file of her personal narratives, little notes from/for others, a folder she referred to as her bible, and a collection of teacher tools (e.g., scissors, pencils, pen, glue).

June a grade 5/6 teacher was my previous teaching colleague. I had not seen her for 6 years, but I remembered her and the special projects she did with my grade six class as the school’s art specialist. June spoke to me about her desk during a planning period when her students were with the music teacher. Her desk was arranged kitty-corner on the far side of the classroom. She sat behind her desk and I sat on the side. She told me she and her team had met for a weekly meeting and her initial interview with me about her life in school had inspired her to ask her team about their roles and if they thought they had changed in the last years. She, too, had asked if I was getting enough of the kind of information I needed. My response was the same as it had been to Beatrice. I was collecting more information than I really knew what to do with at that point in the research process. I reassured her that her contributions were significant, but went away filing the query within the same context as Beatrice’s. June was ill the day before the interview and she arrived at school to a desk that had been inhabited the day prior by a substitute teacher. She apologized for her mess, and said that if I wanted to take a picture
of her desk, “I’ll make sure it’s organized.” She added, “If you want to, because personal organization is very good for me” (June, Interview, 29.10.03). The first items she drew my attention to on her desk were: a consent form for a Ritalin trial for a student, marking that she needed to tend to, her plan for the day, a pile of student handouts, a collection of student agendas/homework books/money/signed consent forms, and materials to take care of herself (i.e., a banana, an orange, and hand lotion), and blue mugs from the staffroom. She had come to school the day of the interview still feeling ill. She felt obliged to be there because she had agreed to meet with me during her planning period, to plan with a substitute teacher during recess, because her team partner was ill, and to in-service teachers in a neighboring school during her lunch hour.

A third teacher, Carole was the one participant who did not talk about her desk in detail. Carole cleared student work from a nearby table and we sat with her desk behind our backs. Her desk was centrally situated, beside her team teaching partner’s, and in front their grade 5/6 student’ desks. The two women often teamed to teach the 60 students. Other team members came by during one recess interview. Carole told me not to look at her desk, because she said, “There is too much there, (quickly adding) but I always know where things are” (Interview, 22.10.03). She then stood up, walked to the desk, took a drink from her water bottle, opened a drawer to reveal what she thought to be the only really important part, a stash of snacks to be shared only with her teammates. As we spoke two partners popped their heads around the corner and she tossed each a treat. A third team member came by for ATA advice. Carole picked forms off her desk and gave them to her colleague. Carole, as an ATA executive member, was supporting her colleague in his role as a school representative for the city local. Her desk held many
items I saw her use earlier during teaching. Respectful of her request, we continued our interview and left her desk without further discussion. I wondered why she did not want to talk about her desk, but I never had the opportunity to discuss her reason.

The fourth teacher, Julia, was a part time grade 1/2 teacher. We met in the office area adjacent to her classroom, because it was more private than the large open area classroom housing three classes. As she was .8 FTE she suggested we meet one afternoon when she was free, meaning when she had time off, and had supposedly completed her workday. Julia also wanted to be sure I had enough information, saying, “I am realizing how much I take for granted, and how much there is to say. I just hope you get enough” (Interview, 28.10.03). In the classroom, there was a desk that Julia referred to as our desk, in reference to the teacher with whom she job shared. In the office she had her own desk, and that was the focus of our conversation. We sat in the office at a worktable at the opposite end of the room to her desk. During our first interview, I noted that the legs of Julia’s desk were covered with knitted socks. When I commented that there must be a story behind the socks, Julia had smiled and we carried on with our meeting. Later, during the second interview, we talked about her desk. The desks’ socks were there to protect the floor so the caretaker wouldn’t have to polish scuffs. We also talked at random about birthday candies, her file of writings, borrowed lesson plans, a baby card to be sent, yesterday’s handouts, adapted workshop material, more of her personal writing stuff, and a decorated flower pot with a bird in it.

*Resource Teacher and Administrators*

The three non-classroom participants were the resource teacher, assistant principal, and the principal. They too provided different dimensions to the data. The
resource teacher, Colleen, worked 3 days a week (.6 FTE), job sharing with a colleague who worked 2 days a week (.4FTE). Her work was primarily as a supportive resource role for special needs students and their teachers. She shared an office with three other specialists, her desk with her job sharing colleague, and the telephone with any colleague who needed privacy during a phone call. The desk items mentioned first included a blue box phonetic program she was using for teaching, junk that she didn’t know what to do with, a picture of her own children, a personalized note pad, an upcoming list of assessments, a to-do list for the school psychologist, some parent information sheets, and a timetable (which was impossible to follow), supplies to share, and a pay cheque. (Colleen, Interview, 13.11.03)

In September the principal took a leave of absence because of the death of a family member. It wasn’t until January and February that I spoke with the two administrators about their desks. The assistant principal, Brent, and I began by talking about his office. It was a newly furnished office with an L-shaped desk. He said it required effort but, “I’m usually able to keep just few things on the desktop” (Brent, Interview. 28.01.03). There was a school laptop computer, Brent’s own laptop, some holiday photos, a mug, a pile of committee work folders, his current professional library, a fish tank, a plant, and several books of children’s literature. The section of the desk in front of me was bare, except for a package wrapped in brown paper. He remembered my exclamations about some posters he had, so he had found a set he gave me as a gift.

Karen, the principal, and I met in March to talk about her desk. She too had new office furniture. It was the time of year when planning had begun for the following term, simultaneously with closure plans for the current year. Her desktop reflected the
complexity of her work. Her laptop and a telephone were placed centrally. She directed my attention to lists and piles of information about June closure and September opening, the school development plan that was due for completion, files to set up for continuity with new staff, report card stuff, school demographics for an upcoming meeting, a new playground pile, an artist-in-residency pile, a partnership pile, and as she referred to them, “These are my try-to get-them-done piles” (Karen, Interview, 20.02.03).

In summary, all of the teachers talked about their desks, six of them in a direct and thorough style by naming and describing visible articles. As described earlier qualities of teachers’ lives were suggested through this text. Table 1 provides a sample of the artifacts. The importance of the objects was related to what teachers do in school, and what others expect them to do.

Unlike earlier semi-structured interviews, during the desk conversations the teachers were the conversational guides. I was a trusted guest who looked at the objects and listened to talk about school life. The next section describes how teachers’ references to items (i.e., stuff, things, and artifacts) related more specifically to their lives in school.

The Story of the Data About Desks

*Data Process*

The data of the desks was processed using grounded theory methods described in Chapter 2. Although this chapter includes sections for the description, analysis, and interpretation of the data, there are no clear lines delineating where one part of the process started and another ended. As discussed in Chapter 2, the process of constant comparison followed by other levels of coding melds the describing, analyzing, and interpreting into increasingly abstract forms of representation.
Table 1. A Sample of Artifacts Teachers Identified on Their Desks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beatrice</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Carole</th>
<th>Julia</th>
<th>Colleen</th>
<th>Brent</th>
<th>Karen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>books</td>
<td>ritalin</td>
<td>snacks</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>blue box</td>
<td>technology</td>
<td>technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tests</td>
<td>agendas</td>
<td>supplies</td>
<td>socks</td>
<td>picture</td>
<td>mug</td>
<td>plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspaper</td>
<td>paperwork</td>
<td>paperwork</td>
<td>candies</td>
<td>note pad</td>
<td>poster file</td>
<td>staff files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juice</td>
<td>money</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>stuff</td>
<td>supplies</td>
<td>photos</td>
<td>reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>forms</td>
<td>ATA file</td>
<td>plans</td>
<td>paycheck</td>
<td>work files</td>
<td>statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narratives</td>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>books</td>
<td>babyscard</td>
<td>testing list</td>
<td>library</td>
<td>equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little notes</td>
<td>homework</td>
<td>artwork</td>
<td>handouts</td>
<td>psych list</td>
<td>fish tank</td>
<td>artist plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her bible</td>
<td>lotion</td>
<td>snacks</td>
<td>workshop</td>
<td>paperwork</td>
<td>plant</td>
<td>partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stuff</td>
<td>blue mugs</td>
<td>supplies</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>timetable</td>
<td>books</td>
<td>to do pile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 'text on the desks' emerged as a category of the phenomenon of teacher life during interpretation of the Phase I data. In Phase I, the data were initially sorted into chunks and coded categorically according to the interview questions about roles, expectations, and quality of life, but there were 903 themes that emerged. This was cumbersome to sort manually. As a result, I selected the theme of teachers' desks so I could fracture the data using axial coding, and then to put them back together. As I compared data and interpreted the text again, two other categories of teacher life (i.e., time and people) emerged (see Figure 9). This chapter is to verify the role categories, better understand stakeholder expectations, and gather information about teacher life. The desk artifacts were categorized according to the various stakeholders' expectations.

**Description of the Data**

**Artifacts of student expectations.** During my classroom observations, students and teachers made regular trips to the teachers' desks, and some teachers worked at their desks. At one level the relationship between teacher and students was connected to miscellaneous items that were considered necessary for teachers to do their work. Teachers indicated essential items for working with students included scissors, glue, pencils, erasers, rulers, pens, and cups. They wanted the materials to be readily accessible
and quick to locate. At another level, the teacher responsible for student learning, identified assorted student work in the form of agendas, projects, papers, workbooks and files that occupied large portions of the teachers’ desks. Morning collections of homework, forms, money, and agendas were placed in designated sections of the desktop. Common to all of the teacher’s desks were signs of accountability in the following forms: daily lesson plans, long range, weekly, and assessment plans. Some teachers kept lesson plans for teaching assistants who worked with special needs students. Thoughts of accountability for student learning outcomes were reflected in the reading and math tests, and practice tests for provincial exams seen on some desks. There were assignments already marked and ready to be shared with other classes, completed but unmarked assignments, and new assignments still to be completed by students. As June said, “This is marking that I’ll be dealing with, projects with marks to be recorded, tests, teaching activities, and student handouts that will be done this afternoon.” At a specialist level were the individual program plans and materials for special needs students readily
accessible in the teacher’s daily planning book for ready reference. The teachers spoke repeatedly of the things a teacher needs to do to teach students. Marking was work that needed to be tended to, or synonymously, work to be done.

Two things became clear from the talk about student related artifacts. First, teachers considered their work with students to be their primary role. The majority of the artifacts reviewed were related directly to preparing, planning, presenting opportunities for student learning, providing student practice, and evaluating student learning. Second, teachers spoke of themselves as managers of materials and finances (i.e., for their students, and colleagues, or staff), and organizers of human interaction.

If teaching students was the primary role, I asked myself about the expectations of the students. As elaborated below, teachers talked about communication, establishing routines, nurturing their students, assessment, and discipline. Similar expectations as these are discussed in the literature (Newton & Newton, 1992).

Beatrice had worked with her students to allow them voice. She developed a routine for student project proposals for independent studies and talked about an amazing proposal written by two grade 3 girls. She said, “I always tell them, when you have an idea you need to make up a little proposal to me and then we can discuss it. They’re going to use recycled materials to show that we have a problem with garbage out on the playground. They talked to me today and their proposal will stay right on my desk until I follow up with them.” (Beatrice, Interview, 31.01.03)

Students expected assessment of their learning and feedback about test results. Several participants’ desks contained tests that were unwritten, recently completed, or marked and ready to return to the students. In all cases participating teachers indicated
student desire to see their tests marked as soon as possible after completion. Since learning outcomes have been emphasized by Alberta Learning, students and their parents are anxious to know student grades (ATA, 2003). Project work was treated differently, where the immediate feedback was not always expected. One class chose to, “…leave completed science projects unedited and unmarked so they could show their classmates and compare one another’s work” (Beatrice, Class Notes, 31.01.03). The teacher said, The class voted to show them to their parents, so the parents could compare all of the students’ projects and who did the most and that way the students could account to their parents for their work” (Beatrice, Class Notes, 31.01.03).

One primary teacher saw her role as a nurturer, including caring for each student as the parent would provide care at home. Some students (and their parents) agreed implicitly that, “I organized the birthday party and the student’s family provided the treats” (Julia, 28.01.03). The literature in the area supports the idea that elementary students expected help from their teachers and for teachers to show that they care about them (Newton & Newton, 1992; Clandinin, 1996; Ayers, 2001; ATA, 2003).

Administration played the role of school disciplinarians (Covell & Howe, 2001) to support teachers of students who behaved inappropriately. The students in the research school also expected administration to act in certain ways. Administration wanted to change the perceived stereotype of assistant principal and principal as being ‘bad’ guys.’ Students were asked to draw pictures to hang in a special office gallery, as a way, “Just to show it wasn’t a bad place to be.” Brent added that he hoped, “Students who misbehave will understand and see administrative staff in a more positive way” (Interview, 22.01.03).
The artifacts helped teachers convey meaning of student (and parent) expectations of their relationships. Teachers thought students expected their teachers to manage and organize communication with their parents, their time for school work, and that teachers were willing to meet students' expectations for activities like special projects, and birthday parties. The artifacts suggesting students' expectations also reflected some parental support/involvement.

*Artifacts of employer expectations.* For the purposes of this study, employers are those people or governing bodies to whom the teachers are responsible and most directly accountable (i.e., parents, school administration, the school system/board, and Alberta Learning). The priority of the relationship between teachers and their students was evident in examining desk artifacts, but were there also signs of the teachers' relationships with those who employed them?

Teachers assigned spots to keep specific bits of official communication. Beatrice exclaimed as she pointed to a big binder, “This is my bible! This is where I keep all the class lists; I keep things parents and volunteers send me; I put them in that. Um, what else? Oh, I get phone calls; I keep things about phone calls in there. It’s just a little folder (in the binder) that has all those little slots in it” (Interview, 24.01.03). The label *my bible* suggested that this was a very important foundational piece of her life in school. Teachers kept paper communication (e.g., letters, notes, memos, and phone messages and reminders), and lists of phone numbers (e.g., contacts ranging from other classrooms in the school, to parents, even outside resources). In addition, administrators had many school schedules consisting of school/system timetables, a yearly calendar, lists for special events, committee participants, professional development activities, and
supervision sheets. Cumulatively, the desktops housed many piles of communication related to school organization and management, thick piles of phone messages, duplicate letters to a parent and a lawyer, school demographics, upcoming newsletters, school opening and closing, staffing, artist-in-residency programs, and information for a new playground.

The participants' desks contained many artifacts relating to their employer/s. For the teachers the information was primarily related to parents, with some system information. Artifacts indicated teachers were involved in communicating and relationship building with parents, volunteers, and system/community resources. To inform or respond to requests required organization and maintenance of records, usually kept in designated places on their desks, and/or special binders and folders. The principal, assistant principal, and the resource teacher had more artifacts related to employers than did the classroom teachers. Their artifacts were primarily, but not exclusively related to parents, the school system, and Alberta Learning. The layers of information housed collectively on their desks revealed the complex and critical nature of their roles in fostering and maintaining positive public relations with others who have a vested interest in the school's governance.

Teachers spoke of artifacts that cued a variety of expectations requiring communication with families, the community, and school administration. June described a form she received from a family doctor for her to complete during a patient's Ritalin medication trial. The child was hyperactive and the parents had sought medical advice. The teacher was expected to monitor the student's behavior at school, complete the form,
and return it to the doctor. She said, “It’s one of those things you don’t question; it just has to be done so you do it” (June, Interview, 29.10.02).

School administration also had expectations of the teachers. For example, all of the teachers were expected to serve as members of committees related to curriculum, such as language arts or technology, library, and professional development. Each of the teachers had folders containing committee information, at hand to work on, or to be shared with their teams. Another example of administrative expectation was Julia’s comment on the school’s potted bird (a stuffed bird in a flower pot) to be passed on between teachers who make errors in judgment. A week after the school sent warning letters home regarding peanut allergies requesting students not bring anything with peanuts to school, Julia asked visiting grandparents to make peanut butter sandwiches. She laughed and said, “It was a wake up call from our administration” (Julia, 28.10.02).

All of the teachers were aware of policy and system expectations regarding their roles. System mandated consent forms for field trips were being collected for long term storage in the office. In the fall, teachers were in the process of collecting general fieldtrip liability waivers for out of school excursions. In the winter, some teachers were collecting forms and money for specific field trips (i.e., swimming lessons). The importance of handling field trips correctly was a priority for the school and the system, to guarantee student safety and well-being and prevent litigation by concerned stakeholders in the event of a problem during the event. This was precipitated by several tragic deaths when students were on field trips, and increased parental pressure to insure a duty of care policy for students on school sponsored trips.
The artifacts suggested employer expectations of teachers as responsible for interacting (as initiators and responders) with parents, the school, the system, and others, such as doctors, in the greater community. Teachers sometimes felt obliged to comply with stakeholder requests because they were fulfilling their duties. At other times they were obliged to engage in complicated tasks (i.e., duty of care paperwork for field trips).

The conversations about desk artifacts yielded strong support for the diverse roles teachers played in relation to students and their employers: Alberta Learning, local school boards, and parents. Messages from the teachers' desks supported trends suggested in the following literature: (a) from the position of Alberta Learning, schools were expected to be more accountable for operations generally, and student outcomes, specifically; (b) changes in education in Alberta brought about by provincial budget cuts, restructuring, and unhappy parents (Taylor, 2001) forced school systems and administrators to focus on management tasks, including 'crisis management' and not on the preferred tasks of instructional leadership; (c) much of principals' other work was downloaded to the staff (Newton & Newton, 1992; Fullan, 1997); (d) the principals depended upon the teachers to maintain high educational standards (Levin, 1992), be active thinkers, participate in decision making, school improvement planning, and so on (Fullan, 1997; Hossack, 1997, p.9); (e) reciprocally, teachers continued to depend on the good will of the principals (e.g., equitable assignment of students to classes, serving as liaison between parent and teacher); (f) parents, as employers trusted teachers to act wisely on their behalf, in the roles of the absentee parent (Piddocke, et al., 1997); (g) communication between schools and homes increased as parents became more involved as partners in their children's
education (Newton & Newton, 1992). Beyond teachers’ relationships with students and employers, there were suggestions of their lives in relation to their profession.

*Artifacts of professional expectations.* There were references to teachers’ professional roles and relationships on their desks. Teachers directed my attention to materials indicative of a range of professional involvement from the ATA community (the desk housing ATA notices), to system and school collegial sharing and borrowing of resources (curriculum a teacher had not taught before, technology support, rubric development following a professional development workshop), and a personal professional letter (drafted to send to members of the legislative assembly regarding the deterioration of public education).

Artifacts indicating professional relationships in the teachers’ lives were interpreted as visible support for teachers’ roles as learners involved in professional development, who advocated for their colleagues across the profession, and in support of personal ideals of public education.

All of the teachers were involved with grade teams and committees within the school. I understood the involvement when they designated the folders/books/papers on their desks. Some teachers mentioned projects with their team teaching partners and collaboration in their classrooms. Beatrice and her partner had worked together for several years. They made arrangements to share teaching, planning, and scheduling. On her desk was a set of student projects. She noted, “So I always like to do projects and so they all have their science books. I had them on my desk because I need to show Susan’s class this afternoon that we’ve got it done and I just put them all in that pile” (Beatrice,
Interview, 30.10.02). There appeared to be a mutual expectation between the students and teachers about how they would collaborate with the assignments.

In one case the school system had identified a need for teachers to know more about teaching phonics. The resource teacher attended the workshops, saying it was part of her professional development plan. The blue box artifact was named earlier as an item of significance when Colleen’s desk was described.

Professional development was clearly part of the expectation for teachers in the school. What struck me in analyzing the data were that the teachers had voluntarily organized to participate in professional based activities. The teachers expected that part of their professional relations meant you chose to work co-operatively and collaboratively with colleagues. It was also assumed teachers were life long learners.

As members of the teaching profession, colleagues, and members of the ATA, the teachers were stakeholders in what all teachers do in schools. The artifact conversations supported recent literature trends in professional development that included themes of collaboration (Slater, 2001), decision-making (Johnson & Button, 1998), teacher responsibility for building relationships (i.e., mentorship), and professional development (Barth, 2001, 2002; Delgado, 1999; Podlosky, 1999). Participants all spoke of a deepening rift between the teachers and public opinion (ARA, 2003). Some participants were actively involved in the ATA (Carole, Interview, 22.10.03).

The expectations students, employers, and the profession have of teachers appeared straightforward and logical. Teachers’ perception of the crisis in education seemed related to the complexities of their lives, of which there were many signs. There
were also less obvious expectations shared by the participants that furthered the researcher’s understanding of teacher life in school.

**Artifacts of relative expectations.** Teachers’ desks contained artifacts pertaining to other roles, less visible roles being played out as part of teachers’ work. I labeled these reoccurring roles ‘relative’ because they were defined in connection to circumstance and expectation. Something as simple as an overdue notice from the library required keeping the note on the desk until the class did agendas, then finding it and putting it in a student’s agenda so the home would be informed and the book returned. The teachers’ comments suggested a ritual involved in the return of an overdue library book. The ritual required a teacher facilitator, student/parent co-operators taking time to see a task through to a satisfactory conclusion much as a caring friend or relative would do for a child.

Artifacts supported the multiplicity of teachers’ roles as planners. Teachers showed me carefully compiled long range and short range planning documents housed in varied binders, files, agendas, computers, each showing multiple layers of plans, timetables, and schedules. All participants alluded to the complexity of their roles as organizational planners related to their work.

Several of the teachers referred to confidential legal school documents. Student information such as cumulative files, school disks for each special needs student’s Individual Program Plans (IPP) as well as IPP files, student proposals for special projects, and a letter to a custody lawyer related to a family who had a student attending the school. The need to guarantee confidentiality made it awkward to keep the documents accessible for planning for special needs students. The presence of these documents designated all of the classroom teachers as responsible for special education students.
Teachers’ roles as technicians surfaced in conversation with Brent (Interview, 22.01.03) about the two computers on his desk. He spoke of technology as a curricular focus as well as a focus in his life and that from the computers he could do student applications or staff applications and that he did not have to be running upstairs to the server or into the lab, if a teacher or a student needed help. Although school technician was one of his official roles, it was also part of all teachers’ curricular responsibilities.

Colleen spoke of sharing pencils and erasers and said, “This is the shared set that we (the people in the office) all use. Two of us share this. Those things aren’t mine. I’m only part time – so I try to leave my desk cleared off so other people have space when I’m not there” (Interview, 29.01.03). Her role included sharing time and space with her partner and other professionals who used the desk/office.

I was not surprised when Julia spoke of her role in helping me to understand her work. She took her role as a research participant seriously. She knew I would be visiting a Language Arts class and prepared information to give to me. She commented, “And this is my personal narrative file. I had stuff in there for you. I wanted to show you that so I just had that on my desk” (Julia, Interview, 21.01.03).

Sometimes teacher’s roles were unpredictable. Colleen (Interview, 13.02) spoke of a paper bag under her desk. She said, “You know, we had a little pet mouse in our room the other day, so, he just came and sat on the floor in our room awhile one day and didn’t move. And we put a box over him and dragged him outside. Isn’t that funny?”

Teachers told me, they had never thought about what other people (i.e., support staff, volunteers) expected from them. I found this interestingly one sided, even though
the teachers had not considered other peoples’ expectations, they assumed that if they didn’t do the ‘right’ things the others would be displeased.

The following is an example of working with support staff. I was curious about what Julia had on the bottom of her desk’s legs. When I asked her about it, she replied, “Socks. Which I knitted and put on when we moved in here and never took them off! So I wouldn’t scratch the floor and I wouldn’t make a lot of noise when I was moving my desk. I didn’t want to upset our caretaker, because at the end of the year with everybody moving, and if it’s the end of year everybody’s temper is a little bit short” (Julia, Interview, 04.02.03). Julia realized that the caretaker had refinished the floors in preparation for fall start-up, and teachers were expected to care for them so they wouldn’t need redoing. The socks provided a sign that if she cared for the floors the caretaker would appreciate her and not get upset with her. The caretaker played an important role in school as was acknowledged in Julia’s reflection.

Teachers’ relationships with support staff were important for the smooth operation of the school. Another example is the mail and how it was dealt with in the school. Electronic mail was controlled by the school system and inconsistently used by most of the participants. Traditional paper mail sent by all segments of society, solicited or unsolicited had to be sorted internally. It was explained that the secretaries sorted the mail and distributed it by role-designation or job. But according to the teachers, the mail never stopped coming, and much of it was trash. There were societal assumptions about teachers in the mail, for example: first, about how they work and what they know or need to know as exemplified by those who send mail and distribute it within a school and
second, that teachers were interested in reading what was sent; it should be part of teachers’ lives.

The expectations of volunteers were sometimes ambiguous. A primary teacher said she had volunteers visiting everyday so she kept a binder with a sign-up schedule for each month and daily plans for the individual volunteers. That way if she was busy they could just go to the book and read directions she had written. She wondered sometimes why she went through all the trouble, because the volunteers often didn’t understand the plans or even read them. Instead they came to her to ask what they were to do. When I spoke to the classroom teachers about their volunteers they were surprised to think that those people would have expectations of them as teachers. One person reflected the surprise of all with, “They are just volunteers, and I really don’t know what they expect. That’s a good question, I’ll have to go home and think about it.” It appeared that teachers tried to clarify their own expectations of volunteers, but had not considered the opposite.

The artifacts suggested less visible stakeholder groups are people and things peripheral to what the teachers called their real work: support staff, volunteers, university researchers, and extras such as mail and technology. If, as the literature indicates, communities no longer look the way they did 20 years ago (Day, 2000; Courchene, 2001; Leach, 1999), the research school community then may not have had so many extra people around, or have been as complicated by material extras such as mail and technology. The ‘other’ roles in addition to the expectations of the more obvious student, employer, and professional stakeholders suggest infinite possibilities for what teachers do and how they do it. As a researcher, the artifacts served as verification of the complexity
of teachers' roles and the expectations of the educational stakeholders in the school. There were also messages regarding the quality of teacher life in school.

Many of the roles were not new or surprising. As roles they portrayed the illusion of straightforward assignment and responsibility taking. Each by itself did not appear to be difficult or unmanageable. In combining the layers of role expectations related to students, varied employers, the profession, and others, the research began to form a complex multi-layered portrait. The portrait became more involved as I analyzed the artifact data related to teacher life.

*Artifacts and life.* The desk artifacts allowed cultural glimpses into teachers' experiences in school. Teachers indirectly addressed the following facets: nourishment and maintenance of physical health, ways to support social emotional needs to make life easier and to feel more safe and secure, and also consideration of the importance of the work environment. These are described as situated and analyzed in the data.

Nourishment to maintain energy was considered in different ways. Some people showed lunch bags, others had snack bars, fruit, bottles of water or juice, and a peppermint dispenser. All teachers had mugs received as gifts from previous schools. Some were used to hold teacher tools, and some for drinking. Lunch was often a time for teachers to do other things, so sometimes eating did not happen. As Julia indicated, "I am pretty good about packing lunch, but I don't eat it. But I pack it, yeah. I probably won't today either. Today is my afternoon off but I'm going to get my hair done so I think maybe I'll have a chance to eat sometime after that" (Julia, Interview, 21, 10.02). In contrast, Beatrice remarked, "I have to look after myself. Um, here's my juice, that's my lifesaver. I have to eat every few hours. What's missing here is my water bottle. I really
need it” (Beatrice, Interview, 30.10.02.). Beatrice always had a snack and something to
drink when we met.

There were personal care products including: throat lozenges for a sore throat,
disinfectant in case a student was sick, and lotion for hands because of the dryness in the
school. Beatrice described items to take care of herself. “That’s my Purell stuff to clean
my hands. I always keep Purell, you know, I don’t like to be sick ever. If I know some
kids I’m working around have been sick a lot, I just come over and do my hands.
Underneath my desk are clothes pins, all my cleaning stuff, a pair of gloves and I’ve got a
J-cloth, and some other cleaning stuff” (Beatrice, Interview, 30.10.02). Taking care to
maintain physical health and a high energy level were priorities for Beatrice.

June told me about things to take care of herself. “This is stuff to take care of
myself – hand cream, a box of Kleenex, an orange, and a banana. These little reminders
are to make my life easier, like the fee notice for winter parking. You know, I have to pay
this if I want to park on the school grounds in the winter; it doesn’t matter if I plug in or
not!” (Interview, 22.10.02).

There were personal possessions like a paycheck on Colleen’s desk. When she
showed it to me she continued,

Oh, this is my purse, there’s my cell phone, my wallet, my car keys. So, isn’t that
nice that I have such a secure place under my desk to put them? There are no
cupboards to lock them in or I would. So I hide it under my desk. It’s just we’re
so crammed in there, you know? And this is so safe that when I get up, I trip over
my purse because my feet are under there and I’ve wrapped myself around in the
straps! (Notes, 04.02.02)
Earlier, she had talked about sharing her desk and her phone with other people. She expressed concern for her personal things when the space was shared with other people. Here she revealed the importance of two kinds of safety: security for her things and her physical safety/comfort.

Brent described his efforts to get into Fen Shuai. He had a plant and a fish because he felt that having something alive is nice in an office. (He had disposed of a dead umbrella plant and replaced it with the plant and fish.) His valuing of the natural environment was also reflected in a photo souvenir from outdoor school that he kept as a treasure.

Teachers' desks housed reminders of personal values in their lives in school. Their artifacts reflected physical need for nutrition, care of the body, and hygiene to maintain health. Personal property illustrated need for safety and security at school, and beyond physical comfort to having living reminders of the natural world. There were also reminders of their lives away from school.

The texts of the desks also allowed glimpses of teachers' lives out of school. The significance of the artifacts from outside school surprised some teachers, who intimated a need to remember important things via holiday souvenirs, photos and children's drawings as reminders of home and family. Other teachers pointed out articles brought from home to school to use in their teaching.

Several teachers found a way to bring holiday reminders to their desks, drawing connections between their lives in school and away. For example, Julia had purchased special pencils for her team when she was on holiday. She showed me her pencils and said, “These pencils, they’ve lost all their arms and legs. I bought them when I went to
Australia. I bought each of our team back one of those kinds of pencils. One had a cow pencil; somebody had a sheep pencil. It was a joke” (Julia, 29.01.02). She added that she had had them for a few years and maybe she should throw them out, but she wasn’t ready to. Central to his desk Brent also had holiday photos that suggested fond memories.

Beatrice had purchased books for a student, but in her comments there are reflections of jointly valuing children’s literature with her daughter, being aware of her student, as well as, buying books for her student.

I’m a real big fan – my daughter’s a huge Gordon Corman fan and we went to the young writer’s conference when Laura was in grade six and he was actually the speaker. I bought these books because I’ve got a student here that I know would really like these, so I’ve got to introduce the books to the whole class. I do a little book talk. But for her I’m going to – these are for her. That’s why they’re sitting on the side of my desk so I can get time, sometime to do it (Beatrice, Interview, 30.10.02).

This example illustrates how Beatrice brought her life values into the classroom as she said, “To share in real ways with my students.” She and her daughter valued reading and this was an opportunity for her to share that passion in an authentic way with her student.

Brent’s role involved technology support in the school and he spoke of how he used the computers in his office and at home. “It saves me some time. When students come and ask for help, I can show them right here. It’s the same with staff. I can ask them what they’re doing and I can show the answer to a teacher’s quick question. Also, my own computer goes home with me every night. I plug it in as soon as I get in the door. I’ll
touch all three computers in my house, a couple of times in an evening, for different sorts of reasons. Anyway, it’s just me. It’s very odd. I know” (Brent, Interview, 22.01.03).

He realized that the technology could be used efficiently at school, but he was not sure how other people (the researcher in this case) might perceive his use of technology at home. He spoke informally of the guilt he felt about time and work. Paradoxically his last comment may reflect tension in saving time at school and spending it at home (Brent, Interview, 22.01.03). Teachers’ life values out of school were reflected in their photos of holidays with families and friends, love of literature that spilled over into the classroom, and the positioning of technology in life. The reflection itself cued questions of human vulnerability in remembering and in trusting technology.

In summary, the data processing of the artifacts on the teachers’ desks illustrated the layers of teachers’ roles and the magnification of those roles with the realization of possible stakeholders’ expectations. This preliminary view brought fresh meaning to teacher life in school, even though, there were yet to be explored gaps between their roles, expectations and personal desire for quality of life.

Interpretation of the Data

*Teachers’ lives.* Karen, the principal, encapsulated the significance of her desk, the items on it, and their collective importance for her in the following quotation.

This desk represents what happens in my day. It begins with, in the morning, either the reflection of the day before and my fatigue or commitment to something else after school; or it reflects my hopes for the next day and my priorities around this kind of work. By the end of the day it reflects my life, my reality.

(Karen, 20/02/03.)
That which happened in her life in school was displayed within the text of her desk. Each artifact served as a coded sign of the school’s culture, enhanced by her articulation of importance (Berger, 1984, p.10). Karen’s desk reflected a life of reflection, fatigue, commitment, hope, priorities, life, and reality. Placed within the context of a desk with mountains of work, and the words of a dedicated professional who had lived through the challenges of six months of the current school year, this mini-desk culture of the school reflected many of the tensions described by other teachers.

The literature on teachers addresses challenges in teachers’ lives (Campbell, 2001). In the research, teachers were generally accepting of things they were told to do, or had to do. How much of what teachers do is based upon a personal perception of the need versus specified expectations of others? This is unclear, but there is evidence that over time teachers have been entombed in powerful myths that carry with them implicit expectations for teachers. For example, a good teacher is said to be a good classroom manager, knows she learns to teach on the job, is always fun, and begins with the given curriculum (Ayers, 2001, p. 10). These messages send only partial meanings about teacher work. Each myth unchallenged can become a truth if it is seen as an expectation. Imagine the implications for a teacher who tried to live up to the assumption that she should always be fun in class, and the guilt felt when faced with an upset student, or potentially traumatic event like death of a loved one. Rhetorically, is it possible that the participants in the project, in living their own truths about what a teacher does, made assumptions about what others thought they should do? How much of the isolation, fear, pressure, and anxiety were by-products of living with myths about teachers (Ayers, 2001)? Actual teachers, like those participants in the research, who lived their days in
schools trying to meet everyone’s expectations could be easily lost in the narrative of the myth. If this is possible, teachers’ individual perceptions would influence what they think should do and what they do. They would then live their lives in consideration of stakeholder expectations, and could lose sight of ‘relative’ expectations, and their own need for quality in life. Karen’s comments about her hopes and her reality suggested ways to further explore the gaps in the data.

*My desk represents my reality.* Karen addressed the artifacts on her desks with stories and their ideas about real life in school. Her candid expression of reflection, fatigue, commitment, hope, and priorities encompassed the way she went about her work. How she began in the morning looking at her desk and thinking about the desk’s contents were cues for: where she left off (with unfinished work) the day before, current priorities that she was committed to getting done, and things she just aspired to doing during the day. She finished each day as she had the day before, hopeful of what was to come tomorrow, or in fatigue and frustration over what had not been done this day. I sensed that her feelings were the result of both stakeholder expectations and her expectations of herself. Likewise, the classroom teachers suggested ways of living to meet expectations of stakeholders, but it seemed that there were also personal expectations involved. I noted this as I continued with the analysis.

*Emergent themes.* Nineteen themes emerged during the coding and comparing of the desk transcripts for the seven participants (see Table II). I realized the categories overlapped when I compared the 19 themes from the desk data to the 103 from the complete set of transcripts for Phase 1. The comparison led to further processing and to two thematic categories of time and people. (As described in the data story in Chapter 2,
these two themes were subsequently compared and analyzed again within the data
collected during Phases 2 and 3. The discussions of time and people informed the bases
for Chapters 5 and 6.)

*Teachers’ strategies.* As they talked about their desks I realized that, in order to
consider expectations, participants usually approached their roles strategically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 of the Data Story</th>
<th>Desks</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time job</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Time (x2)</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (x2)</td>
<td>Running</td>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Redefine roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Enough time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>Part time work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>Special needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>People (x2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Guilt</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
<td>Time pressure</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each item represented part of a personal process that involved management of the
physical aspects of school, as well as the organization of human interactions in building
and maintaining relationships. They kept lesson plans (past, present, future, special needs,
educational assistant, and volunteer) near by so they could read them and add comments
quickly. For teaching the curriculum and doing assessments they kept important material
handy, some piled, or in files so the materials were easy to grab and did not get buried on
the desk. Stakeholder messages, such as phone calls were stored in special files in
drawers as records in the event they had to be referred to later. Class sets of notices were
also preserved in secure places. If they were system related they were stored in the office; classroom related material was stored in the desk or filing cabinet. Teachers wrote lists to organize what had to be done, and took great pride in being able to scratch things out, and celebrate something was just done. They designated special spots for folders (such as money for field trips) that needed to happen.

They posted updated calendars, phone numbers, and schedules on their walls above their desks. They said they knew teachers who had been overwhelmed by the work, and to prevent that you could not be too organized. Consequently they planned during every opportunity they had during school and after school. If they anticipated interruptions (i.e., phone or drop in visitors) they established little “try and get them” organized piles, or endeavors’ piles. They expressed concern for keeping important work visible so it would not get lost. They anguished over having to do all of the work by themselves, but acknowledged difficulty turning it over to someone else to do. Amidst the strategizing, was a pervasive wish to effectively manage the realities of their lives.

*A Core Category for Focus: Teachers’ Aspirations*

The artifacts on the desks portrayed teachers’ dreams, endeavors, goals, and objectives. Teachers spoke candidly about the artifacts as objects that reflected these personal aspirations and the cultural expectations of stakeholders. If cultural expectations stand for the structures that govern teachers’ lives, and individuals’ strategies influence focus in lives, somewhere between is the vital core category of aspiration.

A simplistic way of thinking about the situation of this core category is to imagine a line on a matrix (see Figure 10) that represents the roles and expectations that provided the structure of teachers’ days. For example, the researcher inferred from the supervision
schedules on all the desks that student supervision was an expectation. Some of the conditions for playground supervision were negotiable and others non-negotiable. If a teacher preferred Tuesday morning playground supervision, this was negotiable. However, there was no choice as to whether everyone did playground supervision. It was assumed that everyone would do it because it was expected. If one teacher was absent on her supervision day, another teacher might unexpectedly be asked to fill in for her colleague. The point is that many aspects of the structures are expected, but not all of the conditions related to the structures are negotiable. Similar aspects apply to other unanticipated roles.

Teacher acceptance of a role (expected or not) implied a degree of focus on the task. One teacher talked about planning what she wore to school according to her supervision schedule. Her strategy was to wear slacks on the days she was on ‘playground duty’. Other days she felt free to wear suits, skirts, or dresses. If a teacher
forgot his/her supervision time it was understandable because ‘she or he was probably just busy and forgot’. If it seemed a teacher was ignoring supervision his or her professionalism was questioned. The focus of the teacher in accepting an expectation for supervision led to the development of a strategy or a process. Within the cross-cuts of the mini-framework was a dynamic of the teacher making choices according to personal aspirations, but in relation to other people and time. This dynamic was represented on the matrix as the process of talking with teachers about their strategies related to role expectations.

Discussion

The text of the desk suggested that teachers were involved with structures and conditions of their roles as they were related to people (usually stakeholders) and the passing of and constraints of time. Their strategies reflected how they processed life to meet the conditions of their roles. Between the quadrants of the matrix were the dynamics of the aspirations of which Karen spoke. If a role was expected, was it accepted or rejected? Rather than two linear lines intersecting and forming quadrants there were two dynamics: aspiration that determined acceptance or rejection of a role, and cultural expectation that may have been unknown or unexpected.

The desks presented a primarily flat portrayal, like a table of teacher time, and in the early transcripts the teachers repeatedly referred to time (e.g., time pressures to get things done, buying time through technology, getting through the curriculum by the end of the year, taking time to locate/develop material resources, having their time fragmented, and working part-time). At the end of one conversation the teacher looked at
her watch and said, “It really bugs me that there is never enough time!” This was a vivid expression of one of the teacher’s awareness of the implications of time and life.

Teachers spoke of advocating for one another, building relationships with students, parents and colleagues, providing human support, meeting special needs, running for yourself, redefining your roles, and volunteering. The aspirations of the participants presented an ideal for their lives in school. Karen’s comments about realities and aspirations left me wondering about teacher’s focus in filtering expectations, and the on-going influence on quality of life.

Concluding Thoughts

The chapter presented rich and varied description, analysis, and interpretation of teachers’ talk. Artifacts on their desks were interpreted as signs of their roles, the expectations of stakeholders, as representative of life experienced. The findings were analyzed into initial themes that were then coded and compared to the themes for the transcripts for Phase 1.

This chapter is about the metaphor of teachers’ desk and its significance as a lens to understand their lives in school. Accepted as signs of cultural norms, each artifact represented expectations related to time and people, and strategies for life in school.

The participants provided a rich description of teacher life through the textual lens of their desks. The next chapter builds on these understandings. Corbin & Strauss (1998) suggested looking for the less obvious in the data. In so doing, I removed the artifacts of the desks, and listened to the words, stories, and the ideas related to the human dynamic influencing teacher considerations of life in school. In Chapter 4, I examine time within the full documentation of the data collected during the school year 2001 - 2002.
CHAPTER 4: THE CLOCKS ARE CONTROLLED DOWNTOWN

At the end of one interview, I looked at the big round office clock in Brent’s office and said we should wrap up our interview because it would soon be recess. Brent looked at me, sighed, and said, “Yes our time is up and I hate how that happens!” (Interview, 28.01.03) We had agreed upon a time to begin, anticipated the meeting would last about an hour, and I followed a template of questions to insure quality while still pacing the interview. I thought about Brent’s reaction and his lack of control over time passing.

In every school there are clocks that are controlled centrally within the school system. It was Brent’s frustration as he looked at his clock that reminded me of a common adage amongst teachers that they feel controlled by central office. I also remembered that major school clocks (i.e., for bells, security, and emergency services) were controlled centrally because they were set and re-set downtown. Brent’s expression of ‘time being up and I hate how that happens’ suggested feelings of regret over inability to control time, and desire to use time at his own discretion. His feelings are better understood within the context of time for schools and teachers.

Cultural Context

Cultural Groupthink

In Chapter 4 the power of groupthink (Janis, 1971; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) was considered in relation to time and life in school. The power of the language of the participants was based on the understanding that individuals converse, then separate, and the conversations continue. Ideas shared grow exponentially in each person’s mind and with each contact. Language is dynamic and once expressed it continues to grow in
implicit and explicit ways (Seale, 2004). That is the reflexive nature of language that
draws on and contributes to inter-textual structures. Some researchers believe that
cultural groupthink is built on conceptual metaphors that congeal into a system of
abstract thinking that holds together the entire network associated with cultural meanings.
The congealing occurs when higher levels of metaphors are related in orientation and
structure (Danesi & Perron, 1999). The groupthink about life in school emerged as a
dimension of the theme of time. In this chapter, groupthink suggests that time is
represented by clocks controlled by someone or something other than the individual
teachers.

School Clocks

Almost every room in my research school had a clock. The clock depicted time as
a measure for teachers to monitor and manage themselves (Covey, Merrill, & Merrill;
1994). Time for Alberta’s teachers is historically rooted in the Alberta School Act to
provide parameters for the operation of schools. The Act defines teaching days as days on
which instruction is given by a teacher, a school is closed due to an emergency, it is
closed by order of the Minister, when there is an Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA)
authorized teachers’ convention, there are holidays declared by a board, and any other
days that are approved by the Minister (Province of Alberta, 1997, p. 67).

Local school boards, in turn, may not require a teacher to instruct students more
than 1100 hours, or for more than 200 teaching days in a school year (Province of
Alberta, 1997, p. 67). The boards establish yearly calendars based on provincial
guidelines, and in consultation with the local unit of the ATA. The 2002-2003 calendar
for the Calgary Board of Education included 198 operational days. Individual schools
followed local requirements, responsible to schedule 3 Professional Days, 2 Organizational Days, Parent/Teacher Meetings, and School Hours (opening, lunchtime, & dismissal).

Individual schools manipulate time for professional and school development. For example, in the research school the staff (with parental support) extended the school day to 3:35 p.m. to facilitate additional staff development days. Actual hours of assignable time are mandated in collective agreements between their Boards of Trustees of the ATA. “A teacher not in receipt of any administrative allowance will not be assigned duties in excess of thirty (30) hours per week, averaged over the school year” (Collective Agreement, 2002, p.45). Administrators are to guarantee the complete operation of the school and to work to that end regardless of time and/or days.

Teachers’ contracts vary from temporary to permanent and from full time to a percentage of hours. Three full time and 2 part time classroom teachers signed up as participants in September. The part time teachers had requested .8 FTE and .6 FTE contracts. As terms of employment each part time person agreed to attend all school functions that full time teachers were attending (including staff meetings, parent teacher conferences, professional, and organizational days).

Alberta teachers’ duties for assignable time are devoted to instruction, marking, lesson preparation, student interviews, supervision, and other related professional duties that the principal deemed necessary for proper and orderly functioning of the school (Collective Agreement, 2002, p.45). The expectations for part time teachers are related to role specific professional duties specified by the principal. Teachers are accountable to
employers for spending assigned days, hours, and minutes. Bells ring to signal breaks to begin the day, break for recess, eat lunch, and dismiss to go home at the end the day.

The staff consults with school counsel regarding the scheduling of times and events that effect the greater community. Those times are relayed to students, families, and communities via monthly calendars to communicate and account for time to the system. The participating Assistant Principal regularly updated messages to be conveyed technologically. A computer screen in the front entrance of the research school advertises daily events, calendars, and information available through the school’s website.

These are examples of how time in teachers’ lives is culturally influenced, and in some ways pre-determined. Brent’s frustration regarding his inability to control time passing, and, or to use it at his own discretion, can then be partly understood within the cultural structures. Time became a tool to examine teacher life in school.

The Story of the Data About Time

This chapter is based upon the collection, compilation, analysis, and interpretation of data from observations, artifacts, interview notes, teacher documentation, and photos. The processing described in Chapter 2 used grounded theory methods, and was completed in three phases from September to June. Analysis and interpretation were ongoing throughout the data collection. To review briefly, the initial sorting and coding discussed in Chapter 3 summarized teachers’ responses to questions. The data from the desks provided the basis for elaboration of teachers’ roles, stakeholder expectations, and quality of teachers’ lives as described in Chapter 4. Two other main categories emerged: time, discussed in the Chapter 5 and people, discussed in Chapter 6 (see Figure 11).
Time is discussed as it emerged in the following ways: (a) as the history of the participants’ formal roles designations (in 2002-2003) during initial sorting and coding, (b) as having thematic dimensions and properties - curriculum, money, pressure, fragmentation, and management strategies shown during axial coding, and (c) as the core category of ‘teacher change over time’ suggested during selective coding.

Figure 11. The Story of the Data About Time

A History of Role Changes

In earlier chapters, I described participants’ formal role designations, discussed the preliminary responses of participants to interview questions regarding their roles, and the roles suggested by the artifacts on teachers’ desks. Formal role changes occurred throughout the year (see Figure 12).

In the fall there were administrative and classroom changes. During September the principal took a leave of absence, which resulted in a series of other role changes in
the school. The most obvious impact was on the roles of the Assistant Principal (who assumed the position of Acting Principal) and the Vice Principal (who filled in as Acting Assistant Principal) until the principal returned in October. Also during the fall, the Grade 5/6 teacher who held an ATA executive position began negotiating a .2 FTE secondment to the ATA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal on leave</td>
<td>Returned</td>
<td>Resumed role</td>
<td>Moved to another school</td>
<td>Leave preparation</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal to Acting Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource Teacher (.6 FTE)</td>
<td>Resource .6 &amp; .2 Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr. 1/2 (.8 FTE)</td>
<td>Gr. 1/2 &amp; .2 Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Gr. 3/4 (1. FTE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gr. 5/6 (1. FTE)</td>
<td>Apply for Secondment</td>
<td>Gr.5/6 (.8FTE) Temporary teacher (.2 FTE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gr. 5/6 (1. FTE)</td>
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</table>

Figure 12. The History of Role Changes: September Through June

Secondary effects of the fall changes were evident by the winter of 2003. The teacher’s ATA secondment had been finalized, and a first temporary teacher hired for the .2 FTE replacement. After the first temporary teacher experienced a series of personal tragedies she left the position and was replaced by a second teacher. It took several months to secure the position. Simultaneously, the Principal was considering a full leave of absence for personal reasons for the 2003-2004 term. The Assistant Principal talked in January about changing to other jobs in system leadership.
The aspirations of the two administrators came to fruition in the spring of 2003. The Assistant Principal was placed in a new school, and his previous position was covered internally from March until June. The result was that the .8 FTE Grade 1/2 teacher added .2 FTE leadership to her role, and the .6 Resource teacher added .2 FTE leadership to her role (for the remainder of the year). Shortly thereafter, the Principal announced the approval of her leave for the following year. She and her staff were preparing for school ending and organizing for the 2003 fall term at the same time.

It was not possible to anticipate the effects of sudden or pre-planned role changes, but there were several of each that occurred. Events such as death of loved ones, care of children, and the care of aging and failing parents precipitated formal role changes throughout the year that were human and unavoidable. Each person’s role change left an operational gap in a system where time counted. The gaps were filled internally and through the hiring of substitute and temporary teachers, but for each change there were ripple effects. It took time to find replacement staff, and for those new to their positions to understand the expectations for role fulfillment. Data processing led to greater understanding of the teachers’ time. The specific effects of role changes were not discussed with the participants and the school appeared to operate smoothly.

Thematic Dimensions and Properties of Time

The structures and the conditions of thematic sub-categories of time that evolved from the data included: curriculum, money, pressure, and fragmentation. Teachers managed each of these aspects of time using different strategies. Over the course of the year there were many changes in how the participants used their time.
Curriculum. It is general practice to hire teachers to teach mandated subjects of the Alberta Learning Program of Studies to specific ages and grades. School curriculum in this study pertains to everything a teacher does during a day. Most teachers’ days are occupied with learning, planning, presenting, and evaluating the curriculum. Curricular time is therefore considered a primary dimension of teacher life in school. Some of the strategies teachers developed to achieve curricular expectations and teaching goals are described below.

1. The quantity of information for which teachers were responsible within a period of time was a concern for all participants because they had little time to reflect on curriculum. They expressed concern about the amount of curriculum and not having enough time to cover the content. They managed curriculum through the year by carefully planning what and when the strands would be taught. Teachers appeared to think about their teaching and learning plans in ways that were not necessarily connected to their overall lives. Accomplishment of instructional goals was driven by the amount of time available to do work.

2. The material resources were reviewed each year because they were important in maintaining the high standards of the school. Teachers requested instructional aids in order to accomplish their goals on time. For example, the library committee members met and returned to their grade teams to consult regarding the purchase of curricular materials. In working together the purchasing was done more efficiently and the materials available sooner. It was assumed that the earlier the access to the materials the more quickly curricular goals would be met.
3. The human resources were people that helped teachers meet their teaching goals. The Assistant Principal saw his main role as a support for the teachers. When an area of curriculum was new to teachers they valued professional support from colleagues. For example, June had never taught science, and her team partner who had taught it for twenty-five years helped her to implement the program for the first time. Teachers also had students do classroom tasks such as agenda checking and answering the telephone so teacher preparation time could be used for instructional planning. Supportive committee and teamwork time usually helped save time (except when competition between individuals escalated the intensity). Community volunteers worked in areas where teachers felt support was required to improve student learning. My notes reminded me of a retired teacher who volunteered in the research school each week and provided remedial assistance to students (Researcher Notes, 13.01.03). Contributions of the volunteers enabled teachers to carry on with larger groups of students with the confidence that all student needs were being addressed in some way. These people were highly valued for their support in the classrooms. The assumption was that extra volunteer hours produced more successful students.

4. The curricular learning was assessed continuously and with increasing intensity as the year progressed. Evaluation of student learning and teacher effectiveness began informally the first day of school and continued in formal and informal ways all year. Teachers spoke of the assessment process being on-going, but that it escalated each reporting period as report cards were prepared, sent home, and interviews held with families. Assessment demands climaxed with Provincial
Achievement testing in May and June, and ended after Appeals Day at the end of the school year. All of these assessments required focus and time.

5. Special needs and the amount of time they took were the centre of many discussions with teachers, and a source of anxiety amongst staff. There were at least two children with IPPs in each class I visited. Some of the needs were more obvious than others, and in severe cases necessitated full adult support. Funding shortfalls prevented the hiring of more support staff, so the educational assistants were available for limited amounts of time to work with the special needs students. They worked with teachers to support IPP implementation of curriculum for the students. Teachers wrote the plans and assessed the learning of the special needs students, as they did with all of their students. As Colleen said, “We have to keep these documents handy and be vigilant about applying and modifying the recommendations … in case of an audit by Alberta Learning, IPPs have to be up to date” (Interview, 24.01.03). The cost of IPP students to teachers (in terms of time) is much more than regular students because of student requirements for IPP development and fulfillment of follow-up plans.

6. The implementation strategies for the use of technology were developed school wide to ensure students all had computer access. This required scheduling classes equitably into the computer lab. Technology was not only a subject to be taught as part of the curriculum. The role of technology as a tool to learn the curriculum was addressed in the school development plan, and in classroom instruction. Beatrice commented that it was impossible to cover the curriculum with the time and the technology in the school (Interview, 24.01.03). In the fall the assistant
principal talked about the importance of technology in his life at home and at school he modeled it’s benefits as an invisible tool in teaching and learning.

7. The alternative learning supports, such as, additional time to complete tasks required thoughtfulness and planning (i.e., ESL learners on provincial achievement tests were able to use double the time of English as a First Language students). The school's Internet access was too slow so some teachers assigned home study for students. This was problematic because if a family had a computer at home, younger children usually had to wait for parents and siblings to finish their work before they could do their homework. An alternative that Carole described was ‘co-curricular instruction’ during lunchtime as another way for students to complete assignments (Interview, 06.02.03).

Tied to each aspect of curriculum, were time concerns reflecting issues of accessibility, implementation and accountability, all influenced by the money that was available to spend.

*Money. The school administrators began the year by allocating funds for each aspect of school life. For the last decade teachers and school boards across the province had worked with diminishing funds. Creative communities found ways to work with Alberta Learning guidelines to support school needs where they had not been met through standard funding allocations. Teachers talked about some of the strategies they used to locate funds.*

1. Sometimes wish lists were important because needs emerged during the term, and purchases were required in short time frames. When a new autistic student registered (the first ever in the school’s history) in-servicing teachers and
obtaining materials to work with the student became a high priority to expedite the student’s program. For supplementary funds the school council asked the staff to compile a wish list and money obtained from fund raising projects (e.g., profits from a casino) paid for wish list items. (One teacher confided there was no guarantee that the council would use the money for the items the teachers wanted, because they sometimes had priorities of their own.) As the year progressed, committees negotiated for school council funds to meet their goals, some more quickly and successfully than others. For example, the school culture committee was short of money to hire artists for their famous people’s project so of necessity they revised their plans when council was unable to support the full proposal. Likewise, the library committee was ready to purchase materials for the new curriculum in health, but waited for approval of funds from the school council. The people hours required to locate and to access the funds were over and above the hours needed to plan for the purchases. Both took from time in classrooms and with students.

2. Accessing special funding received special consideration in the spring when staff realized previous funding contracts would end at the end of the term. Several funding proposals were written in application for new technology and fine arts initiatives. Some of the teachers saw the provincially funded Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) grants as a means to teach literacy using the novelty of technology. Some teachers were skeptical about the use of technology in the school. For example, Carole noted, “It is a very expensive way of doing it” (Interview, 06.02.03)! It was her impression that the machines were a costly way
to instruct students. It was costly in time as well as money for the staff because it took weeks outside of class time to write the proposals. In June they learned their bids were successful. The principal attended a March weekend workshop on writing applications for Artist in Residency Grants – this proposal was also accepted for the following year. Even with an active and financially supportive school council, this school made it a priority to apply for extra funding in anticipation of continuing financial shortfalls, and increased diversity in the learning needs of their students.

3. The desire for support was commonly equated with time and money. Teachers said that with money they were able to buy time and gain extra support for their teaching. Without financial support they were forced to prioritize and change strategies. Some teachers used their own money to buy items such as computer programs and books, because the school did not have the money. Beatrice felt students learned more effectively if they used the homework programs purchased by her teaching partner and herself.

4. Teachers viewed meetings as the result of staffing cuts and administrator downloading. Diminished funds for staffing meant there were fewer teachers to cover all school needs, and that class sizes increased to an average of 30 students each. Without specialists for Art or Music the school asked generalists to meet to make decisions related to the special areas. Cutting teachers and teacher time for instruction led to increased pressure for remaining teachers to meet in compensation for the lost time. It seemed that lost teacher hours really were not
lost, the remaining teachers just contributed more hours to make up for the

colleagues who were no longer there.

Time spent on finances and searching for additional funding meant additional

meetings that took teachers from student related work adding an additional layer of

pressure to their lives.

Pressure. All of the teachers felt time pressures. June, who had been ill the day

prior to one of our meetings, exclaimed, “I felt too rushed today, because I was trying to

make up for being away yesterday” (June, Interview, 29.10.02).

1. Guilt was related strategically to the teacher perception of inadequate time to do

everything, and feelings of guilt about not doing more. This was what Colleen
told me, “I feel there is constant pressure to do more, and to do it with less money

and time. I feel guilty when I don’t” (Colleen, Interview, 30.10.02). When

teachers attempted to slow down and savor their time, they also felt guilty because

pressures mounted to take on new responsibilities in addition to the old. Rarely

were accomplishments celebrated until by default the school year was over at the

end of June, and the pressures and feelings of guilt stopped (Brent, Interview,

30.10.02).

2. Integration for special needs’ students necessitated teacher strategies to minimize

pressures in the whole class. The teachers spoke of their feelings of pressure and

guilt in making choices of whose needs to try to meet first, “It’s the behaviour

ones that are in your face, the gifted ones hardly ever get your time. If I was the

parent I would be upset too!” (June, Interview, 29.10.02) Another teacher said,

“So some parents have really high expectations of teachers catering to their
children. Some parents of special needs students feel their children are not getting the quality experiences they deserve, but they are in a class of thirty kids. Try to explain that one ... this is what you are doing for the children, and this is all that you are capable of doing with the time and resources you have (Beatrice, Interview, 23.10.02). There was a sense of futility and guilt reflected by the teachers in that no matter how hard they worked they could never manage the pressures for integration and meeting diverse needs in the best ways they imagined. They simply ran out of time to meet all of the needs of all of the children.

3. Both time and energy began to run out at peak times of the year. At the end of each reporting period having met deadlines for assessing, writing report cards, updating IPP’s, and meeting with parents and students, teachers were left feeling drained. They talked about getting tired and still needing to feel energized. Teachers felt pressure to provide high levels of stimulation to meet their students’ expectations. “Not doing the same old, same old, even though it would be easier to do the old, I have to keep planning—and it’s time. It’s time management! And then I am exhausted.” (Julie, 28.10.02). Julie’s way of coping was to consistently over-plan her lessons, just in case extra work was needed for some students.

4. Time to do extra jobs was an issue for teachers. Any tasks other than direct time with students was additional pressure for teachers who already saw their time as taken. All of the teachers in the school were expected to participate as school community members on grade teams and members of committees. “The main pressures to representing your team on a committee are money and time. The first
issue always is to know how, when, and where you can get the money. The second issue is in the time it takes to collaborate with the layers of people involved in making the decisions” (Carole, Interview, 16.10.02).

5. Relative roles quietly became part of teachers’ lives.

“The whole time you’re in the classroom you are with the kids. You can’t touch any of those other things you are expected to do right away. It’s all those things that pull you away from your students’ learning: urgent phone calls from parents, pizza orders for tomorrow’s pizza lunch, money for photographs due in the office this morning, and just all the extra paperwork” (Beatrice, Interview, 23.10.02).

It was often these ‘extras’ (Barth, 2002) that teachers seemed to provide greatest pressure and teachers had the greatest difficulty managing. ‘Relative roles’ took attention from students and classrooms so that time lines could be met.

*Fragmentation.* Teachers spoke of their roles and the layers of expectations. Each acknowledged that a teacher could not work effectively with unreasonable time pressures forcing them to be spread too thinly. They feared the consequence of time fragmentation and becoming completely overwhelmed because mounting pressures could not be controlled. Several people said that as long as they were making the choices for themselves they would be able reflect on implications and they would not be overwhelmed.

1. Addressing parental concerns and questions was a high priority for teachers. The research school applauded the efforts and support of their parent community. There were, however, a few parents who were perceived as pressuring teachers for special considerations for their own children. One teacher spoke of a
confidential call she had from a parent whose child she had taught the previous year. The parent asked the teacher to investigate (snoop) to find out how her child was being treated by his current teacher. The teacher wanted to act quickly and professionally without alienating the parent, but she felt threatened, and was unsure of what to do. She felt such influence detracted from her and her colleagues’ abilities to work fairly with all children in their classes. The teachers talked about the need to guard themselves against possible fragmentation if they became too caught up with parental pressures. To illustrate, Beatrice explored parent expectations.

Certain parents have expectations that learning just happens at school. It’s the teacher’s responsibility. Parents have told me that, and they have asked why their child is doing this, and this, and this. So we always talk about a home component but certain parents do not buy into home components so they expect it all to happen at school. Either that, or, they expect that their child will be the only one in your classroom. They expect you to check the child’s agenda all of the time, put stuff in their backpacks, and all those kinds of things (Beatrice, Interview, 23.10.02).

2. Curricular demands and money were seen as contributing to fragmentation of teacher performance. For example, curricular learning support for students with special needs frequently required substantial funding beyond that which a school budget could provide. The strategy was to access the funds available through Alberta Learning that required assessment and coding by trained specialists (i.e., psychologists), and appropriate paperwork to be completed. The funding was
sustained provided assessment was continuous and effective. The process was thought to be cumbersome and overwhelming for teachers, especially those who were new to the school and/or had several students who required special assistance. “We need to do IPP’s. It is important. We need to do the work. We need to be rigorous. We need to have a document and we have a process we have to follow. We have to provide program changes for kids, but there is a really awkward bit of paperwork that just straps people’s time at this time of year. It just makes them dog-tired, can be overwhelming, and I think it impacts on what they are doing with the kids” (Brent, Interview, 17.10.02).

The cumulative effects of time as it impacted on curriculum, and was equated to money; led to increased pressures and concern for fragmentation and possible failure.

3. In response to increased expectations, teachers said they would multi-task to make up for lost time and additional demands. Teachers felt the need for constant multi-tasking diminished the quality of their work with children. They expressed feelings of emotional frustration, guilt, being overwhelmed, and physical exhaustion. The under funding of education (Taylor, 2001) became the teachers’ excuse for downloading and the resulting fragmentation in their lives.

Management strategies. The teachers were consistently called on to be strategic in order to meet the multiplicity of their roles. This was discussed earlier in relation to their aspirations and focus inferred from the text of the desks. It appeared that management and organization were paramount in meeting expectations and their strategies implied a sense of change as time passed. Using this lens to explore the data about time, the core category of teacher change emerged.
Teachers had management strategies for saving time so they could do more and continue to meet time expectations of stakeholders. The following is a summary of their strategies. (a) Teachers developed strategies for managing curriculum. They realized it was critical to plan and organize to ensure coverage of curriculum for student learning. In order to meet their goals the teachers had strategies to deal with the time constraints simultaneously with the quantity of information, material resources, human supports, assessment procedures, special student needs, technology, and alternative learning supports. (b) Strategies were developed to access additional school funds to finance resources. The staff created a wish list, wrote proposals for grants, contributed personal funds, and attended meetings. (c) Teachers acknowledged pressures related to time, expectations, and the need for strategies to prevent becoming overwhelmed. They spoke of pressures to do more with less time and money, integrate students with special and diverse needs, maintain high energy levels, do extra jobs, and accept other relative roles. It was difficult to develop strategies for these expectations. (d) They developed strategies to guard against or, avoid being fragmented by the pressures. Several teachers talked about avoiding teachers’ convention because that was one time when they could stay at school and complete some of their own work. The assumed professional benefit was traded-off for the benefit of doing their work. They also mentioned parental pressures, concerns about maintaining personal professional standards of performance, and how multi-tasking could have a negative effect on their work with children.

A Core Category: Teacher Change Over Time

Throughout the research process there was a sense of the change occurring in the participants’ lives. From the beginning of data collection in September, when teachers
spoke of redefining roles, to the final conversations in June, there were always changes discussed. Perhaps as telling as other dimensional aspects of time were teachers’ portraits of their lives in school. Each portrayed complex expectations related curriculum, money, strategy, and pressure that led to change in teachers’ lives. The teachers’ playfully named their roles. June said, “I told my team in a meeting that I feel like a robot” (Interview, 22.10.02). After one class Julia said she felt very tired and that she just felt, “like a puppet” (Interview, 04.02.03). Beatrice met me in the hall one day, saying, “Hi, Marilyn! Add juggler to my list. That’s got to be me today” (Beatrice, Meeting, 23.10.02). These roles (robot, puppet, or juggler) were a sign of change. The participating teachers adapted strategies to deal with the changes in their lives brought on as a consequence of such pressures. Their strategies, whimsically declared as robots, puppets, and jugglers formed the basis of the following interpretations (see Figure 13).

**Robots**

Several teachers spoke of a robotic aspect to their work. Funding cuts meant that curriculum specialists (i.e., music, art, physical education, science) were no longer hired. Teachers became generalists, fitting into an input/output model of learning to increase cost effectiveness. This deskilling (i.e., referring to the trend of writing teacher-proof materials so there is little time needed for professional decision making) of teachers helped me appreciate June’s comments, that “There are lots of things you just do because you have to.” (June, Interview, 22.10.04). The robotic aspects of life in school were epitomized by the adoption, implementation, and expansion of the use of technology.

There was school and community pressure to maintain very high standards of excellence on provincial achievement tests. Increased technological instruction was
<table>
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<td>Roles as robots</td>
<td>Literacy through technology</td>
<td>Third &amp; final year for support from Alberta Learning</td>
<td>-Meeting student curricular needs for current year</td>
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<td>-Proposal writing to granting agencies to buy technology and teacher time for the next year,</td>
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<td>-Proposal writing to better meet needs next year</td>
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<td>Expectations of puppets</td>
<td>Committees provide support for curricular instruction (i.e., library, culture)</td>
<td>-Budget uncertain</td>
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<td>-Choices depend upon budget allocations</td>
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<td>-Then made final choices.</td>
<td>-Culture committee delayed in booking artists</td>
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<td>-Approval of parent council fund-raising</td>
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<td>Quality of Life of jugglers</td>
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<td>-Accountability</td>
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Figure 13. Managing School Time
viewed as a tool to help students become more literate more quickly. As a result several teachers engaged in the time consuming tasks of proposal writing for funding. In spite of concerns about work demands, they felt they had to write the proposals. Doing the work was justified because it would benefit the students in the long term. The process could be charted with each step delineated, program specifications clear, and teacher mindset focused. The proposal was considered necessary, so they just did it.

_Puppets_

As a puppet a teacher’s roles had established parameters. Although allowed more freedom of movement than robots, there were strings attached to how and what they did. Julia felt like a puppet when parents expected her to provide birthday celebrations for their children. The fine arts committee was free to explore artists and activities within the umbrella outlined in the school development plan. The puppeteers controlled the purse strings that financially constrained the ordering of curricular supports for the library, and the artists hired to complement teacher instruction. Teachers appeared to accept the delays related to funding decisions, even if it meant more time and effort would be spent outside of the classroom. Individual teachers and groups were encouraged to be leaders in the school, but were restricted by personal and stakeholder expectations.

_Jugglers_

A juggler plans to perform complicated tasks without losing focus – and dropping a ball. The comment of Beatrice about feeling like a juggler was later expanded on in our interview. This is what she said:

It is just finding time to do all of the things you have to do! So, you are juggling and you prioritize your juggling all of the time ... sometimes the things you really
want to be doing, you cannot do, because there are timelines. You have to be
working on something else. You are running the whole time you are in school.
There is no time to be with your team, even to talk. Or your team partner for that
matter! It is difficult! So, my partner and I email each other constantly. We also
talk for hours on the phone at night and weekends (Beatrice, 23.10.02).
Jugglers’ priorities included: managing prioritizing, scheduling, and balancing. The
layers of tasks required each day left Beatrice and the others juggling tasks and priorities
attempting to gain balance. All of the teachers felt quality of life should include
happiness and fun with students, colleagues, family, and friends. All of the teachers
attempted to bring authentic parts of their personal lives into school life via artifact and
personal passion. The fall commitment to redefinition of roles melded with survival by
juggling. Teachers who kept moving appeared to be balancing their lives satisfactorily.
Being strategic meant they could juggle more, rather than less. Only through formal role
changes did teachers see the redefinition of their roles (i.e., the resource teacher increased
her time in school, and added curriculum leader to her role.)

Discussion

I interpreted the teachers’ portrayals metaphorically, not to engage in assumptions
of groupthink, but rather, to gather features of the characters that highlighted teachers’
perceptions of their lives. For example, as robots, life could be justified by thinking
mechanically, methodically, step-by-step. Teaching happened when pre-determined
information was transmitted to the students, and accounted for via knowledge out-put on
tests. As long as the mechanisms were operable and programming systematic, teachers
roles could be evidenced. Puppets were somewhat freer than robots, but aware of the
strings that controlled their basic functioning and restricted their movements. Once the
degrees of freedom were understood, the teachers could be somewhat creative within the
established parameters. It was possible to reach out to touch learners in meaningful ways.
Jugglers were less constrained than robots and puppets, able to think independently, and
to creatively engage audiences. As long as they maintained personal focus they were
capable of accepting or rejecting new balls unexpectedly tossed into the routine by an
outsider. Common to all enactments were suggestions of individual choice, and the
possible change (Baer, 1994).

*Personal Choice and Change*

All of the participants were passionate about teaching and working with their
students. They were confused and, as illustrated, reacted differently to the complexities of
extenuated role expectations. The following quotation from Brent provided insight into
the tensions teachers experienced in trying to consider the complex expectations in their
lives.

I think the challenge is between what we feel and know and believe to be what we
should be doing, with what we are charged with or obligated to do from many of
the other influences that affect us. I think we get derailed, by stuff, and I think that
there’s real purpose in our work and that sometimes we just don’t get right down
to it because there seem to be other things that are taking precedence, are taking
our energy and our time. It’s that conflict between the time to do what *needs to be
done*, what *must be done*, and what would be *good to do* (Brent, Interview,
17.10.02).
The stuff that derails refers to other expectations that came from extenuating circumstances and developed into relative roles. The consequence was the usurping of teacher’s time and energy in meeting original role expectations. Most important to Brent were the realizations that: (a) the roles were beyond normal expectations, (b) although of relative circumstance, these roles took on a dynamic of their own, and caused conflict, (c) the concerned individuals had little or no control over what they were charged with or obligated to do, and (d) the collective ‘we’ referred to all teachers. It appeared that acceptance of relative roles was culturally expected for all teachers in the research school, and further, that the roles were to be accepted in spite of causing tensions in teachers’ lives. Teachers rarely discussed personal decision-making processes. I had the impression that each person struggled to take time to reflect (to make deliberate decisions) and several were wistful that time might be granted by others. Regardless of how insignificant each new task seemed, it required time to be organized, roles to be defined, and by implication, lives to be changed.

*The New Task*

The perspective of ‘the new task’ in matrix form is illustrated in Figure 14. The matrix contains examples of the structures and process in teachers’ lives that helped to explain why and how changes occurred. For example, roles and expectations provided structures. It appeared that teachers developed management strategies to help them organize these structures (i.e., curricular studies were carefully learned and organized for presentation to students). Within those structures were sub-categories (e.g., money, pressure, and fragmentation) that added dimensional structures and properties. These sub-categories were also managed and organized to meet expectations.
A new task would fall between: (a) the cross-cuts of expected/unexpected roles that structure teachers’ lives, (b) the strategies/processes teachers used in accepting or rejecting the task, and (c) the implied change that the task would bring to their lives. In other words, the new task brought with it consequences regardless of whether or not it was acknowledged.

Managerial strategies helped to explain the process, or how things occurred when a new task was conceived. Consider the implications of ‘the new task’ inherent within the following example of ‘a relative role’. In order to meet expectations for covering technology curriculum the teachers accepted the new task to find ways of meeting learner needs. The relative role that developed was based upon commitment to accessing more money to pay for equipment. In acknowledging and controlling the pressures, the experienced teachers realized that the quality of their lives was different than desired.

Throughout the year teachers expressed concern about additional pressures, and formal roles becoming too fragmented. (Over time teachers became so busy that they lost
sight of the breadth and depth of their accumulating responsibilities.) They seemed less aware, possibly less willing to challenge the continuous growth of their informal roles; however, the consequences of their strategic choices affected how they lived in school. The teachers focused selectively on the big picture of their roles, instead of implications of mounting tensions and personal choice in the complexities of school life. The role of reflection in personal choice seemed to be an ideal (Palmer, 1998, 2000), not used purposefully to understand complexities (or to curb fragmentation). They regretted giving up control of school time and wanted personal discretion in using time.

Considering teachers' time in relation to their role designations and stakeholders' expectations, school curriculum appeared to encompass their lives. How teachers managed the curriculum, all that they did on a day, appeared to be related to whether or not strands were considered to be appropriate or inappropriate expectations. Each teacher seemed to know: what they were needed to do, had to do, and what it would be good to do (what they wanted to do). They managed themselves using strategies to provide a form of balance between the three. Time pressures were seen as a natural part of their time, but managing their balance was risky when they began to feel pressure and fragmentation in living through the time: covering curriculum, providing technology, accessing funds. Teachers lived with the consequences of the strategies they chose.

Teachers viewed curriculum and money as their responsibilities. They developed relative roles (i.e., puppet, robot, juggler), to coincide with formal roles. Teachers usually volunteered for extra positions, but sometimes they felt they had no choice in the matter. There was a willingness to accept relative roles, but felt a tension in being expected to do more. Each new role carried with it expectations for completion. Time and pressure, often
equated, were measuring sticks for gauging teacher actions and reactions to relative roles. A teacher who volunteered her expertise felt little pressure. If a teacher felt pressure, this was seen as negative, because of the looming fear of fragmentation. Participants were cognizant of the possibility of being overwhelmed, or even, of personal failure because there were more responsibilities than time permitted. Teachers were immersed in a regime of creating success (inversely, preventing failure) by being prepared. Teachers wanted to use their time the way they wanted, but it often seemed the control came from somewhere outside themselves ... perhaps from the clock downtown.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, the concept of time as a dimension of teachers’ lives was the theme discussed. Their increasingly complicated and time consuming roles left teachers looking forward to the end of the year and a summer break. They were frustrated by their circumstances and felt unable to change how they worked. Work occupied their time and, regardless of their strategies, balance was lacking in their lives.

If the research question were a puzzle, there would be three pieces. The first, “What are teachers roles?” The second, “How do teachers consider stakeholder expectations?” The third, “How do they consider their own desire for quality in their lives?” Roles and expectations were discussed generally in previous chapters in relation to research questions, and then to objects on the desks. Chapter 4 used time as a tool to examine less visible aspects of teachers’ lives and explore deeper understandings of the roles, expectations, and quality of life discussed earlier. Next, in Chapter 5 it becomes clearer that more than clocks govern teachers’ time. The third and remaining piece has to do with the people in school with whom the teachers worked, the relationships between
CHAPTER 5: IT ONLY MATTERS IF YOU CARE

During our final winter interview Brent discussed the way in which the people at the school worked collaboratively to meet their goals. He ended by saying, “You know Marilyn, if we believe in people we have to foster and maintain the relationships that are fundamental to our lives” (Interview, 28.01.03). This chapter is about relationships and the role of caring as portrayed by the participants in my research school. It builds upon previous chapters by encompassing all of the data previously discussed.

Teachers’ roles in the school were influenced by stakeholder expectations. The lives of teachers were influenced by their management of time, but as discussed in Chapter 4, it appeared that over time the participating teachers became involved more deeply and more broadly in fulfilling roles and related responsibilities. There were activities that needed to be completed out-of-classroom time. Some activities were connected to people and events that left the teachers with the perceived expectation they had little/no choice but to take part. How does this happen? Chapter 5 discusses the data of relationships as described from the participants’ perspectives. This is followed by the interpretation that relates the emergent main themes to teacher life in school and teacher consideration of personal expectations.

Cultural Context

A Caring School

The School Development Plan (2001 – 2005) provided a frame of reference for this chapter. The mission statement included in the School Development Plan reads, “Educating with care, intent and enthusiasm” (School Development Plan, 2003, p.1). One of the key belief statements found within the document says, “We believe that positive
and respectful relationships exist among all members of our school community” (School Development Plan, 2003, p.5). As mentioned earlier, this belief was incorporated into the ethos of the school culture. A special wall built by the parents was inscribed with the words: pride, hope, responsible citizens, cooperation, success, respect, community, imagination, trust, and generosity. The words were chosen to reflect a priority of caring for self, others, and their environment. These ideals were said to provide a foundation for ongoing activities throughout the school year. This message of care was visibly displayed on the walls of the office, some of the classrooms, and in the school handbook section of each student’s daily communication agenda. The school philosophy was conveyed through this vocabulary and many references were made to the wall and to the displays within the school. The teachers appeared sincere in their efforts to ‘walk the talk’ of care.

The school promoted the benefits of sustained relationships and communities for learning. For example, it was intentionally organized with blended classrooms to provide opportunity for children to remain in a learning community for 2 years to preserve relationships between staff and students. Growth within the community supported strengthening of the sense of community through teaming of classrooms and opportunities for teachers to work together for planning and inquiry. The open construction of the facility contributed to flexibility in bringing groups together. As a school they were organized around common understandings. Based on strong leadership capacity that resided in both staff and parent groups, the common understandings were the filters for making overarching decisions. Teams and individuals were then empowered to proceed on behalf of the whole.
The vision statement in the School Development Plan stated “Commitment to positive relationships and success in the learning work of children will be held in priority by parents and staff. Everyone – children, parents, teachers, support staff, administration, and volunteers will see themselves as learners connected together in a journey of passion and purpose for learning (School Development Plan, p.5, 2001 – 2005).” In their work to realize their vision, the school was organized for teachers to work together, to work in teams in the classroom and beyond to grade teams for grade 1 & 2, 3 & 4, and 5 & 6. Resource teachers and specialists were part of the grade teams. Curricular and organizational committees provided opportunity for teachers to share leadership roles and report back to their teams and to the whole staff. Staff meetings and team meetings were held once a week, and the others met as necessary. The ‘We Care’ motto of the school was written into school documents, pervaded relationships within the school community, and drove the work of the school.

Caring

The general intent and use of ‘language of care’ was a part of the desired ethos of the school. My notes and interview transcripts show records of the use of the term ‘care’ in global ways that the researcher assumes would naturally occur in any school in Alberta. It is the researcher’s belief that all people are naturally caring (Noddings, 1992). In this study, the effects of cultural influences influenced how caring looked in daily life. As discussed in Chapter 3, Caring describes a kind of relation.

“It is one in which one person, A, the carer, cares for another, B, and B recognizes that A cares for B … A genuinely listens, feels, and responds with honest concern for B’s expressed interests or needs. When we say, B recognizes, we mean that B
receives A’s caring and reacts in a way that shows it. A relation of caring is complete when B’s recognition becomes part of what A receives in his or her attentiveness. A relation may fall short of caring if either carer or cared-for fails in his or her contribution” (Noddings, 1992, p. 91).

*Teachers are People, Too*

Teachers are positioned to work as natural caregivers with students, in the absence of the students’ parents. During a school day, teachers naturally relate to many people in caring ways. The school development plan’s *language of care* in juxtaposition to Noddings’ *theory of care* suggests the paradox within which teachers live their lives in school. ‘We Care’ as a contrived responsibility (i.e., something that has to be done) within the school community provides an overlay that distorts the concept of caring as a natural, negotiated, and reciprocal process (Noddings, 1992). How does this effect teachers’ roles? Within the language of the school plan, the term ‘caring’ is assumed as a ‘must do.’ Within the *theory of care*, it is natural to care, but for whom one cares is a self choice. This choice may not be clear to those who work in caring professions like teaching (Noddings, 1992, p.90). Believing that to live caring lives in school means being the carer for all things, undermines one’s ability to care for self. The capacity to make choices to be or not be a *carer*, and to be or not be *cared-for*, is key to this inquiry into teachers’ considerations.

It was the researcher’s assumption that a shift of focus from consideration of general stakeholder expectations, to a specific focus on teacher’s expectations provided a clearer picture of how teachers considered their relational lives in school. First the story embedded in the data describes some teachers’ expectation regarding relations. Second,
the emergent themes from the data analysis are interpreted as teacher's personal expectations. Third, the themes are discussed within a framework of care.

The Story of the Data About People

The continued analysis of evolving themes led to the emergence of dimensions of time and relationships in teachers' lives (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. The Story of the Data About People

The dimension of time was discussed in Chapter 4. Relationship is the dimension of teachers' lives that is of primary focus in Chapter 5. The connections between people described in the data included: organization, other people, special needs, support, and advocacy. These connections represent the structures or conditions under which roles are expected or unexpected. To organize emergent strategies that teachers used in forming relations, I shifted my focus onto the themes of relationships, connecting people, meeting
individual and special needs, providing supports, and encouraging advocacy (see Figure 16). A dynamic framework emerged from the intersection of the concepts of ‘teachers’ relations’ and the strategies for ‘relating with teachers as they formed around the core category of care.

The Themes That Emerged From Teachers’ Stories About People

The following stories of teachers’ relationships with others illustrate the researcher’s understandings of ‘teacher as carer’. The conversational style preserves the speakers’ integrity and exemplifies to whom and how the speaker related to others.

Theme #1: Relationships in schools. The participants provided many stories involving relations with other people. The relationships within the organization illustrated how cultural beliefs come alive as priorities in teacher practice (Barth, 2001; Fullan, 2001). The emergent themes are explored by the researcher through the filter of the priorities as lived by: Karen who worked with teachers to connect people and community; Beatrice and Colleen who worked to meet individual and special needs in the
school community; Julie and Brent who provided support for their stakeholders; and Carole and June who advocated for teachers and teaching.

For the teachers who view themselves as leaders, “What separates effective from ineffective leaders is how much they really care about other people” (Fullan, 2001, p. 55). The teachers who were mentioned saw themselves as leaders and they took relationship building seriously. Fullan’s statement could give the impression that teacher/leader care is open-ended and one cannot possibly care enough for other people, which could result in self-care being neglected in favor of care for others.

Theme #2: Connecting people. The governance of the research school was developed in policy by the system, led by the principal, supported by the assistant and vice principals, and facilitated by teacher leaders. All personnel were organized as supporters of the governance model according to roles and individual styles. As the principal, Karen’s vision for the school influenced the way she hired staff and expected people to live together. The following segment of her story of staffing and leadership explains her leadership style and her expectations regarding relationships in the school.

“Well, I think in a successful school the principal’s role ... probably the most important part of my job, is staffing to find those people who see children at the forefront of their work and are humble, I think, in their understanding of how much there is to know. These people tend to be a touch hard on themselves. I think that people who know how much they don’t know are people who know a ton, because they have to know a lot in order to know what they don’t know. The ones that are consistently of their own mind, who are the Prima Donnas, drive me crazy! They are the ones that think they know it all. I have been fortunate with most places along the way. Some of the schools have people
who have been very fragile, but there’s something in there that oftentimes those who are fragile are the ones who have the depth of care. So, it’s to help them rebuild and they bring with them a little bit of that humbleness. Every once in a while there’s one that doesn’t work, but I don’t panic, and yet, I have used administrative transfer for a couple of people along my way who, I hope very much, that I would never have to deal again in my life. So that would be one dimension of my role. Another dimension is the bringing together a community of people that share an inner soul, and when that inner soul is there, they are able to forgive and give each other space and evolve in their own ways. You know, I don’t believe my role is to have a group of – what is it, Dolly, the cloned sheep? It’s to be very clear in my vision of what it is that good education is, and then to step back and let people have the space to play that out in the ways that are the most comfortable to them. And as long as I walk in and see that critical relationship between the teacher and the child, and the teacher and the parent, and learning. If children are able to articulate what they’re learning, and why, then I can live with the full range of methodology. As long as that teacher can tell me why they are doing it the way they are” (Karen, Interview, 24.01.03).

Karen went on to say, “I have to say that I’m not a principal who believes that my role is to interrogate. There’s a lot of talk around asking the big question. And I like to dangle the big issues out there, but I personally was never comfortable with, kind of, the drill performance when I was a teacher because sometimes you’re on the spot in the defensive and you lose sight of what you really know. So I tend to not go in and say, ‘Why did you do it that way?’ By the same token, I don’t do the brownbag lunches (doing everything ready for them to do), or those contrived – questions. I find them really
contrived. I see my role as trying to connect the people who are doing the good work with as many resources and -- not just things. I don’t mean things, but time, collegial dialogue time, and other resource people—all of those things. I would say my role today is anything but what I think it should be. That’s what I see my role as and I try to preserve that. I believe my role has profoundly changed: the things that come to my day versus what I believe my true talents are, and what I could be most helpful in, in terms of children and learning” (Karen, Interview, 24.01.03).

These were beliefs that she modeled in relationships with staff. The connections between people were important to Karen. As the principal she wanted a staff that was committed to children (who provided a depth of care), shared in community, and inquired into personal practice. Karen’s work as a principal was being intensified and becoming increasingly complex. While she expressed her frustration over these changes she was at the same time continuing to nourish caring relationships in her life in school. According to the literature this is common amongst female leaders—even when the women express frustration and discouragement with their roles (Young & Ansara, 1999; Young, 2002). In discussing Theme #2 it appeared some teachers and administrators felt their caring was an open-ended expectation - as though it was not possible to care enough.

Theme #3: Meeting individual and special needs. Two participants told stories of connecting people through the meeting of individual and special needs. Beatrice and Colleen were connected with and committed to the people in the community. Beatrice was very aware of her students as individual learners and with unique individual needs in the classroom. Colleen, while aware of all students, was especially involved with the
students whose needs required school, and possibly system, support. She was also aware
of the importance of clear open communication within communities of learners.

When I observed her teaching in the fall one of her students came to me for help. He
stayed beside me most of the period. In our debriefing after the lesson, she said, “You
know, David, I guess, he immediately went to you. So, I thought about it and almost
came by to ask what was going on. I didn’t know if I needed to intervene or not. So, in
the back of mind, I was asking myself what I should do about that situation? I didn’t want
him to interrupt your research. I just let it go. I wasn’t sure if you were aware of who he
was and his background. Obviously what he was up to today gives you a little idea. He
has an attachment disorder and he does that with every adult. He was sitting there with
you and I was just listening to the hum around. Mary, the educational assistant, is with
my autistic student so there is no one for him, just me” (Beatrice, Interview, 30.10.02).

When I visited Beatrice in the winter she reminded me about David. “In the fall, when
you were in my class, probably David took up all your time. I lost David. He left, oh –
yeah. I’ll have to talk to you about that because it’s a long story. He left in December and
went to another foster home out in the country. There were six children in the foster
home, single Mom. Oh, it was – oh, yeah, it was a tough, tough December because he
moved from one foster home to another. One family thought they would keep him and
then they didn’t. They moved him to another family, then in between all this they kept
telling him this was going to be his last day of school. For three weeks, he came here
thinking every day was going to be his last day. He would come crying every day. It was
hard to get him to stop. Then in the middle of the day his behavior just escalated horribly,
and so it was really bad. I had a really bad December. Oh, it was terrible-- and poor Mary
(the assistant) was just beside herself. So, yeah, it was tough! So, I lost him. The school that he’s gone to somewhere out in the East has been excellent. Before they even thought he was going to come to their school they sent a team of four here to observe him, to talk to me and to Mary. Then they sent the resource teacher here and later they sent the teacher too. All that was done before he went to the new school. When it was going to be his last day there was a big problem. We had a celebration for his last day, then the next day he came here again. Oh, it was so bad, I’ll tell you” (Beatrice, Interview, 24, 01.03).

A few days later Beatrice remembered David’s story again. She said, “Oh, I really wanted to talk about David and I didn’t! We ran out of time, maybe I can email you” (Beatrice, Interview, 28.01.03).

The depth of teacher commitment and care for this student is sadly reflected in her profound sense of loss. He was one child who was consumed by difficulties that impeded his ability to learn, or as aptly stated by the principal, he was, “… a child who was not available to learn” (Karen, Interview, 24.10.03). Yet, months after his move his teacher remembered him emotionally as a child she had lost. In my final meeting with her in June, Beatrice explained that social services had changed their plans regarding his departure from the research school without consulting with or notifying the school. Miscommunication between the child welfare worker and the school had led to this circumstance. Could it have been prevented? Yes. Was there a lasting affect on the child? That I can only surmise.

A second participant shared stories of relations pertinent to a discussion of individual needs. Colleen was one of the school’s three resource teachers. Part of her role was focused on connecting students with the community to help their needs. She was
committed to supporting both students and teachers. The emphases in her work changed according to school need. When I spoke with her in the fall she talked about her relationships with teachers at report card time, parental involvement in the resource process, and community linking to meet student needs.

"My work is hardest at report card time because then teachers become more accountable for what they're doing in the classroom with those kids, too. There are the IPPs and the parent-teacher interviews are coming up. Are they doing what they need to be doing? You know, for the IPPs? Teachers probably know that something better can be done for students but we don't have the support to enable that, so they refer the students to me. I think by the time I'm involved with the parents they either accept teacher concerns about their child; or they're totally going to reject the idea, because you're going to tell them something they totally don't want to hear. But when I get involved, or I get other people involved, the process goes to another level for parents. Sometimes it is the first time parents have heard about their child having specific problems. I mean, not that they always agree with what we're saying, but I don't think it's the same kind of stress level that teachers have because usually by the time I get involved, we're taking an active role in trying to make things change. The process here is that if a teacher is finding that a student needs support, they're evaluating and then they refer the student to the School Resource Group (SRG). The principal and I are the main ones, but I ask the teachers to invite anyone they would like to the meetings. Usually parents aren't at the initial SRG, but often they are and we also invite them back periodically to review the plans. If there are outside supports that I feel will be necessary like a school nurse, a program specialist -- I mean we get police, we get speech therapy and then I invite them
to that meeting. Then there’s a follow-up SRG meeting. Usually I do an informal educational assessment first and then maybe it goes to the psychologist, but there’s not enough money or time for that! Last year we had some student psychologists do some testing. That kind of helped us get through a number of students because we worked with the university” (Colleen, Interview, 16.10.02).

Colleen had a network of contacts that she relied on for information and support for the school. Many contacts were made through the internal SRG process, but sometimes a student’s case could not be solved in school and there was system involvement. “We did a big case meeting downtown on this little child – did I give you some background on him? He’s Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. He’s been removed from the home many times. So we had police, social workers, and program specialists, at the conference. Everything that we’ve done with the boy at school made the people at the conference happy. The outcome now is that he may go home to the foster family. He would change schools because right now he is on temporary guardianship, but the social worker is going to try to find a family in this area so he can stay at our school and have some stability. So, it was kind of sad because everybody has really been working hard and he’s really coming along, and now he will have to change foster families again. So, anyway, that’s where that conference ended up. It’s a system decision, with a judge sitting on this one, just waiting to make the decision. It’s sad, there’s a little sister age three who will be going back too” (Colleen, Interview, 13. 10.02).

The commitment of the resource teacher to student need and student learning included direct instruction, but primarily supported children with needs that were difficult to address in the classroom. The teacher developed links of support as typified within the
SRG process for sharing expertise within and beyond the school community. Both Beatrice and Colleen were conscious of the difference it can make to a child's learning, when appropriate classroom, school, and home supports are in place. Both of the teachers were aware of the importance of the webs of relationships that are woven in classrooms and schools, and both had expressed concern over their inability to do as much as possible to help their special needs students. This is a familiar concern in the literature as teachers are expected to deal with increasingly complex relationships with fewer supports and less time to fulfill their roles (ATA, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Portelli & Solomon, 2001).

*Theme #4: Providing supports.* In the discussions of the first three themes it was noted that perceptions of support to enhance teaching and learning included: non-material – human support, a part of which included time for reflection; shared classroom support from an educational assistant; and diverse material and human support for all teachers and special needs students. Julie and Brent’s examples illustrate forms of support.

Julie relied on the support of parent volunteers. To help control volunteer satisfaction she organized and provided them with the support they expected.

"The parents here are generally really supportive. But, you know I want to touch wood when I say that! I’ve been very lucky and I don’t want to – well, I should show you my volunteer calendar. It’s filled every day with parents. Sometimes two parents a day. It’s taking a huge amount of my time now to organize what they do when they come in. I want them to work with students, but even today somebody came in that I knew was not good with kids, who should do things in the workroom other than work with kids. The more I get to know the parents the more I know their strengths. I have someone who is phenomenal on the computer. And other ones, they’re great with kids. I just say to those
volunteers: “This is what I want you to do, here are your materials, and just do it.” They have control. But, today it didn’t work so well, I didn’t know this grade one parent the way I know the parents of the grade two students. I have a lot of learning to do just to get to know what the grade one parents do well. They’re coming in, too, just to watch how things go. The grade two parents already know so they’re not watching, they’re just doing. But the grade one parents, they’re watching. So, one of my roles is entertainer!

Seriously, I’m putting them in working with students, because they are in a lot. I put this little plan book together and so – actually I am doing two lessons plans. I will give them something to do and I’ll write it all out. So, in a way this organization is becoming a bit onerous. I don’t know if it’s worth it or not. They look at the book, I’ll ask if they have any questions, and they always do. So I’m probably not explaining it good enough. When I want them to work with students, it has to be a fairly detailed plan.

I’m just using them in a different way this year. It used to be that they just did home reading with the students. Then I would ask them to photocopy this, take this over there, or clean this up. But, I’m just trying to think of better ways to use them. It’s not that our kids are needy, it’s just a better way to use the volunteers than having them do stuff for me, that I could send down to the work room for office staff: I’m trying to have the volunteers feel like they’re useful and actually here to help. I’m thinking, too, they might get to understand how difficult it can be sometimes. And so when they question – maybe it will take some of the question away when they – or it might bring on more questions, too. So, I don’t know. It’s an experiment. We’ll see how it works. Did they sign up for November? Oh, yes! See? I don’t draw a line at how many I can have, but, see this person has signed up every time and she’s not come once. She has good intentions,
but that’s all. If she came for art today I guess I would get her to clean up after art. She might not want to come again though, but I’ll see.

I remember once when I went to help at my son’s school, there was another parent who happened to be there at the same time, and we were filling glue bottles. I’ll never forget her comment, ‘You know, I came in to help and I’m over here filling glue bottles!’ She was really put out by that and that’s probably what put the bug in my mind thinking about volunteers’ help. You know, I would never have thought twice about that before because filling glue bottles is just something that needs to get done! She felt that she was doing things that weren’t useful or important. I always have to balance the filling glue bottles kind of work, with working with students. It’s surprising how important these things are to some parents. To the volunteer it might be one of the most important things in their week. So, that’s where there is parent need, I guess, too” (Julia, Interview, 29.10.03).

Her relationships with the volunteers grew over time. This grade 1/2 teacher was very sensitive of parent expectations and planned how they would help. She supported the volunteers and they in return supported her work with their children. Everyone’s learning was enhanced. Sharing the classroom with parents that she did not know meant they might just have been there to see what was going on. It was onerous work to plan in anticipation of teacher, parent, and student needs; however once these links were established the teacher’s concerns diminished.

Brent too, knew how onerous it could be to locate and provide supports, in particular because of his need to satisfy expectations of many facets of the community including and beyond the classroom. Brent was committed to provision of quality
instruction and learning in the school and recognized that all stakeholders had needs. As Assistant Principal he was supporting staff and students, but as Acting Principal his influence shifted to support for teachers. He was committed to stakeholder satisfaction and supported the principal in sharing system perspectives with the staff. His vision for enhancement of learning within the school included technology as a means of support.

"I see meeting the needs of, really, parents, staff and students and probably in that order, although I don’t like the order. It seems that those are the tugs in my life. My role is resource to those groups. I am a supporter of those groups. Part of my role here is also, kind of, a personal interest, but with technology it also becomes the resource or the lead teacher with that and the responsibilities and trappings that go with that as well. I really hope that I’m perceived as a facilitator and a resource person. If there is a need or a deficit or an interest in an area, that people will come and ask me. And if I can’t, then part of my role is to find, or provide, or source out, what they/we need to do and what we are doing with children. And I’ve given that a fair bit of thought but it’s not very nice because I really do look at what it is that the parents want and what it is the teachers need to do their work. And that sort of feels disconnected from kids.

Ideally, my support (as assistant principal) looks like trying to provide prep to the grade two students, and all of the grade three/fours. I also provide prep time through phys. ed. and story for kindergarten. I am engaged with all of the teachers, over the course of the year through their AISI technology projects. These are projects that they, sort of, have an interest in for their professional development. I’m the resource coordinator and that kind of thing. So, that’s sort of the skeleton of the day and then my real day actually begins. More likely though, my day starts with bus situations, or
problems and calamities with behavior, playground, or lunchroom. We have some specific student behavior needs and I provide some intervention outside and inside the classroom with support to the teachers. The work just goes on from there to staffing, support staffing, updating/planning budget, and writing the newsletter. I’ve also got an ATA report that is due, the school emergency plan, school map, emergency exit markings—all the sort of stuff ready to do for fall updates. You know, it almost feels like filler but to say that you don’t do it, or can’t, don’t want to be attending to it, is not correct, either, so. I feel guilty spending time doing these things.

As the acting principal what I really like to do, or what I hope, is that my role has shifted from influencing individual students to influencing the staff and the teachers and their teaching. And if I think that I can get them a little bit more turned on to technology, is one other thing, or a little bit more comfortable so that they can do it without feeling suffocated by yet another demand, that I’m having a positive influence. That if they ask me a question about how to work with a student, that I can help provide some background or a little bit—a few words of inspiration to get them through the day. That if they’re not feeling good about the meeting they are going into today, I speak with the teacher about my plan for the meeting. I hope this takes some of the pressure off so that they can go into the classroom and be really great. That’s what I like to do. That’s my preferred role right now.

As acting principal it’s just keeping my job going and the school going. It gives me a greater sense of what one-administrator schools really can’t do it. It’s not possible! Well, what I’ve seen being the acting principal is that I can, is that I get all of the tugs and I can’t really defer them to anybody else. Sorry, I am the one administrator and there’s no
one else really to defer it to. There’s no real relief and one of the things that I said, probably a week ago, is that I’m not sure I can keep the pace. It was newsletter, it was parent council meeting, it was principals’ meeting happened three days in a row. I don’t want to dwell there, but it was very concentrated. If you’re that person and you’re not sure what’s going on in the building some of the time, or those other things are stacking up and you don’t have somebody to run some interference for you, it’s a real grind without much relief; because there’s always one more person coming in your door, one more piece of paper coming, and one more email to respond to” (Brent, Interview, 10.10.02).

In the winter, as an assistant principal Brent spoke of his work in relation to computers. “Along with that work (with students and teachers in classrooms), – you know, it’s just a technology focus even in my own life. I like people to see that we’ve got the tools and that it’s available. I have two computers. Our school platform for students is Macintosh. And this is mainly for administrative purposes. So, even though I can have the two computers talk through the server, it’s much easier to do some things on this one, although it’s not very high powered, I like it. I mean, it looks flashy but it’s really quite weak, but I can do student applications or staff applications here. I can do users and passwords from here that I cannot do on this machine. And it just means that I don’t have to be running upstairs to the server or into the lab. It saves me some time. When students come and say, ‘I can’t get this open,’ or ‘I don’t know what to do,’ I can have it here, spin it around and say, ‘Did you try this?’ So that’s why. I know it looks a little bit like overkill, but there is a function for me. And then when I’ve had staff do projects or whatever, and I’ll say, ‘What are you doing?’ and they have a quick question, I can show
them. Or, more often, what happens is, ‘So, what are you doing here? Show me what you’re doing” (Brent, Interview, 28.01.03).

Julie and Brent found forms of support for teaching and learning through the use of human volunteers and computers (Day, 2000; Courchene, 2001). The human bonds and the technology were important in the school. While the technological connections might be interpreted as electronic representations of the school, positive links with volunteers suggested a reciprocal support between people in the community and the school. Carole and June offered stories of human advocacy as a form of support that helps people move forward in the profession. The role of advocacy in teacher ‘as carer’ suggests special support and care for stakeholders who are not necessarily teachers. It also suggests advocacy and care for technical connections that may not be related to people. In the age of a global technological and information revolution calls for support need not be limited to human, but may also be of a materialistic nature (Courchene, 2001).

*Theme #5. Encouraging advocacy.* Carole was positioned to relate to her school colleagues as a teacher and as executive member of the ATA. The strata of the professional roles seen in her school life focused on advocacy for teachers and teaching.

“The beauty of experience is that you can pull from your repertoire to slot in with new routines and new patterns. And I know that the new staff member is, I swear he was going to lose his mind a couple times this week already, and it’s only Wednesday morning. Because – I don’t know, maybe with everything that I’m doing, I’m getting used to changing on a dime and fifteen years of teaching experience has taught me that, you know, yes, it’s discombobulating – I like that word today for some reason! You
know, I was managing but he was struggling so we had to – you know, we had to have a couple of meetings and check things out and, you know, do – it’s almost like blood pressure checks. We make sure we’re okay, but with that whole mentorship thing you end up supporting each other in a reciprocal kind of mentorship. It sounds like, a little bit, because he has, of all people on staff, has an appreciation, or some appreciation for what you do on those other two days. And he’s very supportive and he’s let me know how important I am to him as a colleague. Which makes it all worthwhile – you know, it’s just those little things that we don’t always remember to do. And he’s got his own strengths. As we work our way through this special project we’re talking about how we want this to look in the end. We’re changing our mind a little bit in mid-stream and we’re thinking of going to a hyper-studio presentation and he’s got more technical and technology experience than I do, so we were talking about meeting Friday at noon and he told me he could pull out the learning strands because we needed to meet right away and plan the work. So it was like, cool, you know, because I don’t have to do that.

I’ve always been an advocate for teachers, and I can still do that as a member of the ATA Executive. I know I’ve got a lot of personal and professional support, that reciprocal piece again and that helps me a lot. I think it’s working well. I think, for instance, at CSR meetings, if questions need to be asked, they’re asking me now. I think they’re – you know, I’ve been in the role now for just over a year now and I think the year that I brought them through, with the strike and the legislation and all, we’ve established mutual support” (Carole, Interview, 05.02.03).

Carole’s involvement in the ATA positioned her as adviser and advocate for other members of the ATA in her school. Initially, there was some tension between her and the
administration. This was discussed and resolved early in the term and she was fully supported in her work for the ATA. Her skill as an advocate was rooted in her work with her grade team.

June was another participant who had professional links to advocate for others. Through her affiliation with the University of Calgary she and her team partner had a student teacher to mentor. “I haven’t had a student teacher for a couple of years – and this woman, we’re actually sharing. So, she’s just doing the observation Mondays with Sharon, Tuesdays here, and then at the beginning of March there are five lessons she’ll do for me all in a row. But, yeah, we’ve just done a lot of talking. I’ve given her some information just so that she could plan some stuff that she needs to do for university. And, she’s a very nice woman” (June, Interview, 29.01.03). When I met with her in February her student teacher had arrived. “I have a student teacher now. Yeah, Sharon and I are sharing one. She’s wonderful, so I can see her helping out a lot” (June, Interview, 04.02.03).

I observed June teaching when her student teacher was there. The student teacher voluntarily fit in to assist in clarification of the lesson. June said, “Well, she asked if she could do that and I replied that I thought that was good. She asked if she could stop the students and so I thought, well, that’s good, too. It takes some initiative. She really fits in” (June, Interview, 29.02.03).

There were two student teachers in the school and June and her team partner mentored one of them. June’s fall anticipation became a reality in January. June welcomed the new perspective and invited the student teacher to suggest changes because she knew the students would just go along with it. She was pleased to advocate for the
student teacher by writing positive narrative assessments in evaluation of her practicum.

In return the student teacher provided support for June and her class. Both June and Carole passionately advocated for teachers and the future of the teaching profession.

Teacher leaders engage in capacity building with colleagues as a way to demonstrate care for the professional (Leithwood, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2002).

Summary of the teachers as carers. The stories from the teachers illustrate an organizational model wherein teachers are empowered to lead and expected to connect as a community. The many stakeholders were involved in a variety of processes and relationships: leading, hiring staff, mentoring colleagues in the local school community and the greater professional community, helping student teachers, losing a student, processing special needs, satisfying volunteers, and providing resources that were both human and material. Common to all of the stories was an ethic of support, often realized as advocacy for individuals within the community. I considered the concept of advocacy as a way for teachers to relate to others in caring ways.

A Core Category: Care

The central category of care can be envisioned through my borrowings from the ‘theory of care’ (Noddings, 1984, 1992a, 1992b, 1998, 2003). I imagine myself at the center of concentric circles representing relationships. In the innermost circle, surrounding me, are the most intense and caring relationships. As I move outward in the circles, I encounter those for whom I have positive regard. Here, as in the more intimate circles, I am guided in what I do by at least three considerations: how I feel, what the other expects of me, and what the situational relationship requires of me. Persons in these circles do not, in the usual course of events, require from me what my families naturally
demand … I am comfortable in these circles if I am in compliance with the rules of the
game. Again, these rules do not compel me, but they have instrumental force that is easily
recognized. “I listen with a certain ready appreciation to colleagues, and I respond in a
polite, acceptable fashion. But I must not forget that the rules are only aids to smooth
passage through unproblematic events. They protect and insulate me. They are a
reflection of someone’s sense of relatedness institutionalized in our culture. But they do
not put me in touch; they do not guarantee the relation itself. Thus rules will not be
decisive for us in critical situations, but they can be acknowledged as economies of a
sort” (Noddings, 1986, p.46).

Teachers’ knowledge of themselves, cultural expectations, and situational
relationships are factors involved in making choices. As school days increase in
complexity that can only partly be pre-determined, cultural norms can serve as rules of
convenience. These rules, used to govern decision-making and help maintain status quo,
may also serve to minimize individual voice and choice.

What about proximate others who you and I have not yet met? Personal and
formal links may be connected to our inner circles. For example, future students are
linked formally to those I already care for and they, too, enter my life potentially cared-
for. Chains of caring are established, some linking unknown individuals to those already
anchored in the inner circles and some forming whole new circles of potential caring. I
am ‘prepared to care’ because I recognize these chains. “But what of the stranger, one
who comes to me without the bonds established in my chains of caring? Is there any
sense in which I can be prepared to care for him? I can remain receptive … a standard
fashion of controlling what comes in is to rely on situational rules. These protect me. The
strain on one who would care can be great. The ‘have to do ‘of the one-caring and the
cared-for, are internal imperatives. An observer can see imperatives clearly, but the ‘I
must’ suggests itself as binding upon the one in whom it occurs. We are both free and
bound in our circles and chains” (Noddings, 1984, p. 48).

The participating teachers made decisions regarding, when, and how their
relationships would look. The themes discussed were representative of teachers’
perspectives and their personal interpretations of their roles. Until now the teachers’
expectations of themselves have not been discussed, but within the teachers’
conversations each alluded to links with staff members, students, parents, and so on (see
Table 3). Each conversation suggested signs of the teacher as a ‘carer of others’ and of
existing circles and chains linked together for mutual support (Campbell, 2001, 2003).
Examples of the relations are as follows:

1. The school principal, Karen, expected all leaders to show a depth of care in their
commitment to children, to share in bringing a community of people together, and
to be inquirers. Following one staff meeting a distraught teacher came crying for
help with a problem. Karen put her hand on the teacher’s shoulder, followed her
into the office, and closed the door. As in her story of expectations for staffing,
she, too, offered a depth of care to the staff. When she was accepted by one
wanting to be cared-for, a circle of care was formed.

2. Likewise, Beatrice, the classroom teacher, whose concern for a student ended in
deep feelings of loss, had offered to care for the student as an absentee parent. Her
offer to care and the student’s responsiveness to being cared-for meant the caring
circle was completed for the boy at school. The reciprocity existed no longer as he
became increasingly disturbed. When he finally left, the teacher felt loss as one who had cared.

Table 3. Teachers as Carers of Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carer</th>
<th>Desire to Help</th>
<th>Cared-for</th>
<th>Caring</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal as school leader</td>
<td>Connecting people</td>
<td>Teachers and students</td>
<td>Building positive community</td>
<td>+ Circles of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>Meeting special needs in classroom</td>
<td>Student with attachment disorder</td>
<td>Experienced loss</td>
<td>- Circle is broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource teacher</td>
<td>Meeting special needs in the school</td>
<td>Student in case review</td>
<td>Experienced success</td>
<td>+ Circles are linked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>Providing support</td>
<td>Parent volunteers</td>
<td>Parents are satisfied/unsatisfied</td>
<td>+/- Chains are maintained/broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant principal</td>
<td>Providing support</td>
<td>Parents, staff, and students</td>
<td>Satisfying stakeholders</td>
<td>+ Circles are formed and linked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team teacher/ATA executive</td>
<td>Encouraging Advocacy</td>
<td>Teacher colleague</td>
<td>Teachers are mentored</td>
<td>+ Circles of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>Encouraging Advocacy</td>
<td>Student teacher</td>
<td>Student teacher is mentored</td>
<td>+ Circle of care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The resource teacher experienced linking of caring circles in the system case review of a child. The possibility of positive relations with future foster parents suggested the dynamic of other links to strengthen the child’s circles of care.

4. Julia, the teacher who looked after each volunteer, may or may not have been appreciated as a carer, by the other person. Links may or may not have been formed between caring circles between child and parent, and student and teacher. A parent, who volunteered to see what was happening in the class, was not responsive to the teacher’s offer to care by providing personalized plans.

5. The assistant principal felt it was his responsibility to try to care for and support everyone in the community. Where the relationships were reciprocal and negotiated, the links drew disparate caring circles together as chains.
6. Those teachers, who felt a responsibility in advocating for teachers, colleagues, and student teachers, offered them care. Their expectation that they were to care was genuinely listened to and recognized by those chosen to be cared-for.

Caring relations were initiated, fostered, maintained, and sometimes broken or left incomplete. All the relations were between the individual teacher who offered to care and the individual desiring to be cared-for. The importance of the mutuality of the relation is key in this discussion, because of the implications for the teacher as one offering to care. As long as the cared-for recognized the care and the carer remained attentive to the persons' needs, circles were linked, strengthened, and maintained, for mutual benefit.

When the recognition was not established there were no links, even though a teacher may have offered to care. When the recognition of care was no longer desired the links were no longer there. It was clear that efforts to care were dynamic, situational, and ever changing. Common to the teachers' organizational strategies was the dynamic of an offer 'to care' coupled with a willingness of others 'to take the care' the teachers offered.

Discussion: Personal Choicepoints in Teachers' Lives

The relationships of the community were based upon implicit and explicit understandings of expectations, implying a one size fits all appearance to decision making. What I have come to understand more clearly is that decisions to care or not, are influenced by what teachers know about (a) themselves, (b) cultural expectations, and (c) situational relationships in school. If teachers choose not to care, then life goes along with seemingly minimal change. If teachers choose to care, changes are more obvious.

Looking from the perspective of the individual participants, I envisioned the depth of care and commitment to others that was reflected in their choices. I wondered about
the quality of individual self care and how it fit into my original research question of how teachers consider the expectations of others along with their own desire for quality in their lives. If we consider circles and chains as containing choicepoints along which individual choices are made that effect quality of life, the dynamic can be envisioned. This is not a linear process; it is constantly changing, and developing, and as a result implies a matter of individual self care to monitor what is happening.

The point at which a decision is made potentially affects one’s life. For that reason I called it a ‘choicepoint’. It is a choicepoint whether or an individual is directly involved in the decision making process. Teachers spoke openly about their physical, spiritual, professional, and social needs. These needs are discussed below relative to examples of expressed concerns for self and hypothetical choicepoints along the way to fulfillment. Each description is followed by a question that is rhetorical and meant for reader reflection.

**Physical**

Physical well-being was a common topic of discussion in the staff room and in the interviews. Teachers were conscious of their physical vulnerability and frequently spoke of how tired they were. Physical ailments such as sore throats, and talk of treatment or drugs for colds and flu were common. The principal was taking medication for high blood pressure. Some spoke of preventative measures: regular disciplined physical activity, nutritious diet – rather than the easy to grab junk food (i.e., avoiding the comfort of a chocolate bar from the fridge), drinking water and juice, and hygiene in the classroom. Signs of thoughtfulness in this regard were seen on the teachers’ desks (i.e., water, fruit, cleaners). The principal reminded teachers on several occasions to take their
echinechic, get plenty of rest, and remember to drink lots of water and juice. Beyond the friendly information sharing and reminders to others, what lifestyle choices were individuals making consciously or unconsciously?

A high priority for one teacher, although a luxury, was to go running three times a week. Although it was sometimes challenging to get there, she claimed the running kept her healthy. Eating lunch with colleagues in the staffroom was also seen as a luxury that few teachers ever indulged, because there was always so much to do. (Long term effects of such choices on each individual’s quality of health could be questioned.) Choosing to not engage in activities that understandably affect personal health implied personal physical health is not as important as other situational influences (i.e., expectations of others). To what extent were the teachers’ choices to engage (or not engage) in such luxurious activities helpful or detrimental to their self health care?

Spiritual

One of student teachers said that from her perspective as a parent and a new teacher, it appeared impossible for teachers in 2003 to find the balance between health and joy in their lives. The sponsoring teacher agreed. Choice point, what does this say about efficacy in teaching? The spiritual need of teachers was mentioned only by Karen when she spoke of the importance of spirit and hope in current times. The other participants spoke of having no time to think, and the merits of participating in my project was that it allowed that reflection time. Teachers appeared to be aware of the possible blocks, but were sometimes unable to challenge their own or others’ expectations for their lives. How often are the choicepoints along the path to reflective lives blocked by other needs?
Teachers met many learning needs through organized professional development activities, reading, squeezing in the occasional workshop, and consulting with colleagues. Several of the teachers had two degrees and one was in the process of reapplying for a masters program she let expire. All said there were just too many other things to do. Some were wistful about wanting to explore a particular field, but just could not. At what point does a professional development advertisement become an opportunity for professional learning? At what point is an opportunity no longer considered worth pursuing? The administration team had endorsed my research project as a PD opportunity in the school, and participants in the end spoke of it as a professionally enriching experience. Seven of the staff volunteered to participate. Choicepoints involving decisions to take part or to continue professional learning activities have implications for the teacher’s professional growth. At which point/s are choices made to participate or not participate in professional activities?

The principal spoke of the webs of interaction between staff members. A number of the teachers had worked with her in other schools, and had moved with her to the present site. Their appreciation for each other and common understandings were rooted historically and culturally connected. Choices to hire familiar people and to agree to move with the principal fostered collaboration and cooperation, and eased cultural transitions between schools. What are the implications for the hiring and acceptance of the decisions at these historical choicepoints?

Part-time teachers spoke of feelings of isolation from staff. They expressed greater satisfaction and less isolation after making choices to increase their hours. They
were aware of their occupations usurping quality time at home, and realized the trade-offs they made in increasing their hours. What are the cumulative effects of decisions made to increase work time so each person would be in the school more?

Several teachers talked of feeling nervous and worried about being involved in professional development activities. Choices about professional development are usually personally determined. When the principal asked a teacher to attend a system meeting it may or may not be deemed professional development for the attendee. How can choicepoints for leadership be accurately labeled according to whom it was intended to benefit, and the connection to teacher's personal goals? Choicepoints about what one should do, needs to do, and wants to do were reoccurring in the conversations.

Social

Participants felt guilty about leaving school behind, about not spending enough time with loved ones, or engaging in recreational activities. Although they were unanimous in feeling a need for balance in their lives at home and school, it was Brent, the male participant, who felt he had achieved a kind of balance. The females all felt lack of balance. Several were adamant there could be no balance, because school expectations were so big. Brent felt balance was achieved when he felt he had a choice in how he used his time. What are the determinants of balance? Is the difference related to gender differences? Is balance also controlled along with time ... downtown?

Teachers felt constant pressure to take more personal time to do more for the school with less time and money. Cutting out the feeling of pressure to do school things outside of school was an aspiration for all participants. Two teachers discussed leaving the profession to get away from the pressure. The part time teachers saw the week as
divided between home and school and that allowed them to feel less pressure (in comparison to their colleagues who worked full time). When pressures increased part time teachers also spent extra hours at school instead of going home. The choicepoints between staying and leaving are not easy to see. How is it that when people were faced with a difficult choice, they often made a decision that potentially interfered with their long term best interest?

To have a social life required making sacrifices so teachers still had time to prepare for the next day at school. Several teachers said that life at home evolved around driving their children to their activities. There wasn’t any time left for self. One teacher who lived alone spoke of the best times as being able to get together with friends, but that didn’t happen nearly often enough because she was so busy at school. More than having to make conscious decisions to pursue outside interests, the teachers anguished over seemingly enormous expectations. Who is/are the most important person/s in the teacher’s life. Is there a place for oneself on the list?

As Karen said, sometimes people are just not available to learn. Her comment was in reference to students who for many reasons were not able to learn, but perhaps this can also apply to adult learners, i.e., teachers. To achieve one’s desires it appears that one has to be available to care for self. “Schools should give more attention to understanding ourselves and our various allegiances” (Noddings, 1992, p.117). Caring for self physically, spiritually, professionally, and socially is important and is a continuous process that is developed in relation to others. In a preoccupation with others, do teachers choose to care or not care for themselves? Could it be that teachers’ ways of considering stakeholder expectations along with their desire for quality in their lives is related to
personal availability to make caring choices for themselves? The response to these questions will be considered in an emergent theory considering teachers’ lives in school, discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Concluding Thoughts

In our last meeting, the principal told me that she was pacing her last days in the school. Each day she cleared more projects from her desk as another sign that her work was finishing. The school year ended. The participating teachers were exhausted and ready for a break. Karen had achieved her goal, her desk was clear, and she was finally in charge of her own reality. In the world of teachers it is interesting to think about the metaphor of the desk being illustrative of how teachers govern their lives.

Chapter 5 discussed the people and some of their relationships in school that enabled the teachers to connect in community, to meet individual needs, to provide support, and encourage advocacy. The central enabling influence was the teachers’ natural desire to care for others. Teachers made choices to care or not care when accepting or rejecting role expectations, but most of the time they were accepting and wanting to care for others. Chapter 6, *Teacher Life in School*, is the concluding chapter. It contains a summary of the research, an emergent theory of teacher life in school, research limitations, research significance, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS’ LIVES IN SCHOOL

The substance of the response to the research question is in the intensity of teacher focus on their lives with students, colleagues, parents, and others. To suggest that it only matters if teachers care, would be too simple. Earlier chapters illustrated the complexities of teacher’s lives as potential ‘carers’. The complex nature of teachers’ roles and stakeholders’ expectations were discussed as grounded in the QoL literature (ATA, 1993, 2002, 2003; Baer, 1994; Day, et al., 2000) in Chapters 1 and 2. For convenience, metaphors and examples of groupthink (Janis, 1971) were used to illustrate teacher focus. In Chapter 3, conversations about objects representing individual’s roles and stakeholder expectations allowed the dual leadership focuses managing (time) and organizing (people) to emerge from the data of the desks (Leithwood, 2002). The first was explored in Chapter 4 as a projection that time is controlled (i.e., with clocks) and there were strategies teachers developed as a result of their feelings about time (CTF, 1993; King & Peart, 1992). By implication, changing school culture was thought to be a constant. The second was explored in Chapter 5 in relation to people and relationships: playing multiple roles, managing change by making choices at points along the way, and offering care to the myriad stakeholders (Palmer, 1998, 2000). Quite the opposite of simplistic, teacher caring was thought to be complex and multifaceted (Campbell, 2001, 2003; Noddings, 1992, 1999).

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to summarize the research and to propose an emergent theory to deepen the reader’s understanding of teacher life in school. Also presented are implications and limitations of the work, the significance of researcher understandings, suggestions for further research, and concluding thoughts.
Summary of the Research

In the epigraph to this study, I referred to the crises in education occurring around the world. In Chapter 1, I suggested the reasons for the crises in Alberta (Taylor, 2001; Young, 2002; Reynold, 2002). The educational process of cultural self-evolution is addressed in this study through the voices of teachers who occupy center stage in education. The data as they were analyzed and interpreted (using grounded theory methods of Corbin & Strauss, 1990) suggested a theory for teacher life in school. Figure 17 contains a summary of the research as it developed into an emergent theory.

Cultural Context

The research began with my acknowledgement of a cultural context in the form of norms of societal expectations to help explain what was happening in schools. The state of education was my initial curiosity, and eventually, it led to this exploration of the phenomena of teachers’ lives in schools. A perceived paradox exists between simplistic assumptions that teachers’ responsibilities are exclusively with teaching students and an extreme opposite assumption that schools can seamlessly absorb societal pressures to do more with less (i.e., larger class sizes along with staff cuts, financial constraints, increasing stakeholder pressures for more effective programming, increasingly diverse student populations, and greater accountability). The impact on teachers seemed logical, because they seemed to have much more to do, but still retained responsibility for students as their primary mandate. I thought teachers must have been finding ways to maintain quality in their own lives… or were they not? Teachers I visited during completion of my doctoral coursework spoke of redefining their roles, but had they? I did not know, but I anticipated that public education and, more specifically, teacher life in
Figure 17. Choicepoint: An Emergent Theory of Teacher Life in School.
school was being deeply influenced by cultural norms.

*Status quo.* Cultural norms as they reflected the status quo were reviewed in the literature pertaining to teachers' lives. Cultural norms that shaped and governed public education, contributed to the ways teachers lived with expectations of educational stakeholders, and personal aspirations for quality of life. From this work came the understanding that the teachers' lives were governed by a multitude of stakeholders, formally and informally, that each stakeholder had expectations for the roles that teachers' played, and that teachers did not feel balance in their lives. The most frequently acknowledged roles were related to students, employees, and the teaching profession. There was, however, another more difficult to discern category, which I named 'relative' as it appeared to occur intermittently and less predictably. Literature pertaining to the culture of teachers in Canada was limited, however, two sources considered aspects of teacher life that were: (a) 'hidden' (Piddocke, et al 1997) and (b) 'extra' (CTF, 1993).

*Teacher life.* I chose to situate the research within a middle-sized urban elementary school. The research project explored the lives of seven teachers. The context, that is, the culture as viewed through the School Development Plan, portrayed the valuing of democratic rights and responsibilities that were fostered and maintained through caring language (i.e., 'We Care' language) and positive relationships in a sharing community (i.e., depth of care of staff, and the guiding principle of the absentee parent). The community had high standards for the quality of living and learning in the school.

*The Research into the Phenomena of Teacher Life in School*

The conditions and structures that I believed had primary effects on teachers' school lives were those that resulted from formal and informal expectations of their
stakeholders (i.e., their students, colleagues, employers, parents). Teacher roles and responsibilities were formed in compliance with those expectations. All roles and responsibilities were not made explicit; so lives were lived according to personal perceptions of others’ expectations and how teachers believed relationships should occur.

*How teachers lived in school.* Teachers developed strategies or processes to manage and organize their lives within the school’s culture. Their desks were used as a way to portray the complexities upon which their roles and responsibilities were focused. On the desks were representations of: (a) their roles as the structures and conditions governing their lives (e.g., referring to time and management), and (b) how they did what they did and how they related to one another (e.g., their strategies/approaches and the processes they followed). How they fulfilled their roles and met expectations required two kinds of awareness. First, was an awareness of time and management strategies to accomplish and account for their achievement. Second, was an awareness or understanding of relationships within an organization mandated to meet individual students’ learning need. Teachers developed time management strategies to cover curriculum, access money, acknowledge pressures, and avoid fragmentation. They also developed strategies to organize relationships to connect people, meet individual and special needs, provide supports, and encourage advocacy. Their managerial and organizational strategies implied change for the school culture and residual effects on personal life.

*Effects of their strategies on the teachers’ lives.* Teachers’ strategies brought changes that were sometimes acknowledged and sometimes unacknowledged. Any
changes potentially affected the quality of the teachers’ lives. Common to all strategies was a reoccurring and central category of care for others.

The expectation seemed that there would be acceptance of situational rules to care for other people and things (i.e., computers), but rarely in relation to care for the teacher him or herself. The cultural rite to care seemed engrained as a dimension of all expectations for teacher practice. It was this custom that appeared to affect teachers’ disposition toward acceptance of relative roles. The specific effects of some choices were seen as distracting from classroom roles and providing more work for the teacher.

For the people who chose not to embrace the relative tasks, there were mixed reactions. It was implied that not participating was not caring. By extending that thought, the choices not to care led colleagues to question commitment to school culture (e.g., with its philosophy of caring, working, and sharing in community). Teachers intimated that there was pressure from others ‘to care enough’ in order to gain and maintain acceptance of the group.

The teacher’s quality in life is situated between the personal aspect of being willing and prepared to care for others and the cultural aspect of expectation of care as a cultural rite that can be taken for granted. How teachers worked within this gap is integral to the response to the research question.

An Emergent Theory of Teacher Life in School.

It is within the realm of making choices to effect life change that I posited the suggestion of the emergence of Choicepoint: A Theory of Teacher Life in School. Is it feasible that the conditions and resulting strategies of these teachers can be considered in at least partial explanation of the research question: How do teachers consider
stakeholder expectations as well as their own desire for quality in life? It appeared from this study, that to achieve one’s desires the teacher had to be available to care for him or herself physically, spiritually, professionally, and socially as part of a continuous process developed in relation to others. An examination of personal expectations earlier in Chapter 5 provided examples of choicepoints, where decisions that were either made or passed by, effected change that could make a difference in teachers’ lives. Acceptance or rejection of roles and encumbering responsibilities lead to change, and reciprocally those changes lead to changes in the initiating expectation. Recognition of the effect of the decisions made or not made at choicepoints lead to cycles of change in which expectations were modified because they were challenged. An example follows.

When it was assumed the ‘usual’ teacher would run a recycling club (because she had for several years previously), and she refused, the immediate effect was that there was no one to take on the role so the idea was dropped. Both expectation and role ceased to exist. The teacher was satisfied with her choice and no one else seemed to object. When related recycling projects were suggested later in the year, it was no longer assumed that any particular person would accept the responsibility. The expectations for a role had changed because of one teacher’s challenge. This one decision to withdraw responsibility for what appeared to be a small task had a significant effect on at least one teacher’s life. At the meeting in which the teacher spoke about her decision, recycling ceased to be an issue for her and, seemingly, anyone else. The materials that had been collected in years prior were now left up to individual staff members to handle with whatever degree of consideration they chose. What is noteworthy is that the teacher expressed her choice publicly. She raised her concern in a staff meeting and gave other
staff members the opportunity to respond. No one asked or commented on her decision and she was empowered because she voiced her decision. Both choice and voice appeared to be important features in teacher considerations of their lives.

Implications of the Research

Choicepoints

There are implications in this research for teacher understanding of choicepoints. Society assumes and expects that teachers make choices governing their own best interests for their lives. It was suggested in this research that making choices and bringing voice to their decisions may help teachers in redefining their roles. If nothing is said about a concern, there is no acknowledgement of need. This implies the importance of communication between people to encourage understanding of choicepoints.

Within the dual leadership dynamic of concerns for management and organization there are potential choicepoints upon which teachers may or may not focus. The focus of attention shows understanding that there is a possible choice to be made. The more difficult it is to focus, the more likely a choicepoint will be unacknowledged. Complexities hide poignant simplicities, such as, the key focal point of an issue and the importance of individual voice. Unsupported choices and voices are realized as loss of potential in creating positive educational change. It is then a community responsibility to promote awareness of valued choicepoints and clarification of related information.

Pressure

The work of teachers has been reported here and elsewhere to be fraught with pressures that exert daily influences on their lives (Day, 2000). The belief in the term ‘pressures’ as a truism used to explain and justify teachers’ lives was interesting. The
implication of such truisms is that they complicate teachers' lives leading them to believe that it is futile to try to bring quality change. It is not clear where the participants perceived pressure in relation to choicepoints. Instances of expression of pressure were sometimes: anticipatory or precursors to commitment; reactions to frustrations during a process; and still others, to processes that were carried out unexpectedly over time. Staff loyalty to one another showed the strength of relationships within the school community. Teachers did identify collegial and parental pressures as important but manageable. They used the term downloading to describe outside pressures that they had to deal with, and they were fearful because they suspected increased downloading was coming. Truisms related to pressure carry with them implications for the well-being of all who live in schools.

Advocacy

The valuing of advocacy by teachers contained a message regarding the kind of support teachers desired. Support took many forms and was usually received in positive ways. Direct advocacy through writing letters, promoting individuals for jobs, and sharing success stories were received positively. Perception of advocacy was influenced by time and circumstances. Time for reflection was universally aspired to by participants but (i.e., as discussed during interviews), when asked by the principal in a staff meeting to engage in a reflective activity, her ideas were received with mixed reactions ranging from acceptance to open rejection. Advocacy, as a form of care, also appears dependent upon audience desire and reciprocity. When placed on a staff meeting agenda as another thing to do, many teachers preferred to opt out and save time. With this degree of unpredictability, teachers are called upon to redefine their roles in ways that promote care
for themselves, and in so doing influence and care for their community. Redefinition implies advocating for sharing and communication with those who are the formal leaders, as a way of showing the reciprocal aspects of caring circles/chains.

*Universality of Relative Roles*

Relative roles were a universal concern to teachers because they brought with them increased pressures. An important consideration in enhancing teacher quality of life is better understanding of the role of self within a realm of choicepoints that include expectations of relative roles.

One of the implications of a teacher accepting relative roles is the possibility of a task becoming an on-going expectation. The person who chose to care became the person responsible for the task. The insidious nature of these tasks is that the possibility for spin off growth and expansion of the job, is at least as great as it being something ‘quick to do’, or a one time only job. As Gary Phillips (1999), a keynote speaker at a conference I recently attended aptly phrased it, “Routines become habits that become rituals!” If teachers are in the habit of being ‘carers’, as the data in the study suggest, and they consistently offer their care, then care can be considered as a cultural rite. The ritual of teacher caring (i.e., for all and at any time) has advanced to a stage of cultural expectation or groupthink. The effect of groupthink is seen as teachers struggle to maintain sense of self and well-being appearing to neglect their own license to think and be decision makers. Leadership can then be called upon to challenge the groupthink of the status quo through their linkages with the greater community. It may be that the relative roles of the teachers provide the greatest opportunities for transformation, as relative tasks may not yet be considered to part of the usual routine or even habit stage of expectation. A useful
example of this may be the offering of extra-curricular activities in schools where traditionally activities have been offered to students after hours or beyond teacher instructional time (i.e., band, cross country running). Teachers’ offerings as volunteers formed part of the ethos of the school, part of the culture to be ritually re-enacted.

**Transformational Leadership**

The interpretations of this research convey the importance of transformational leadership willing to examine and effect positive change to transform teachers’ lives. In this study, teachers spoke of pressures because of managerial concerns for time and curriculum coupled with organizational desire for meeting needs through provision of support. Such a complex design requires leadership that can help transform school life of pressure and fragmentation to influence ‘thinking lives back together.’ Such implications for leadership are related to commitments and capacities of organizational members to address the tensions in ways that promote positive change.

Transformational leadership is based upon the premise that higher levels of commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals result in extra effort and greater productivity. Leadership does not take on new meaning when qualified by the term ‘teacher’. It entails the exercise of influence over beliefs, actions, and values of others as the leadership from any source (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2002, p.116).

The difference between teachers and formal leaders is in how influence is exercised and for what end effect. The perspective that supports consideration of all teachers as potential school leaders is strengthened by the understandings in this thesis.
Limitations of the Research

*Qualitative Research*

The qualitative intent of this research was to engage in an exploration that would lead to deeper and richer understandings of teachers’ lives in school. The end product is a description and interpretation of the information gathered from seven teachers in one school. Some qualitative researchers may question the methodology and choose to use another lens (i.e., phenomenology, semiotics). However, as elaborated earlier, there is scientific support for the use of grounded theory as a viable research approach.

*Researcher Bias*

Researcher bias as explained earlier may affect the research. My background enabled me to feel comfortable in my interactions with the participants and relate to their ideas. Qualitative researchers recognize that the presence of an outsider changes the research context, but familiarity with the site and the participants is seen as positively influencing the work (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Neuman, 2000; Wolcott, 2001).

*Data Processing*

The conversational data that were gathered, contained rich information and I struggled to make choices to honor the participants’ voices. The mining of the data was to locate information pertinent to the research questions, and in the final stages exposed the core category of care. Processing the data in these ways necessitated the elimination of data that could have been analyzed in other ways. For example, teachers used words such as crisis, overwhelmed, frustrated, and exhausted. Had I used discourse analysis with a focus on the power and meaning of specific words, the interpretations may have looked
different. I chose to leave information that seemed peripheral to my research purpose, with the possibility of returning to mine the data from other perspectives at another time.

**Gender Differences**

The intent of this research was to explore teachers’ lives in school. Questions related to gender were not included and this may be considered a limitation to the study. I knew elementary teachers in Alberta were primarily female and six of the participants were female. I assumed that participants would be primarily female. As explained earlier I felt this would provide a fair representation within the research school. However, as I worked through the analysis I observed that data from female and male participants were somewhat different. There were several observations that I noted about Brent who was the only male participant, and an administrator. First, his perspective on balance and quality of life was decisive and positive. Most of the females were cautious and/or uncertain about the quality of their lives. Brent felt he was in control. Second, was his commitment to technology (i.e., that led him to take his two computers home every night and on weekends). The female teachers were not as engaged in technology and most of them were skeptical of the cost and energy it involved. Third, he felt his key role was to support his stakeholders. The females expressed need for greater support. Such differences may or may not have been gender, or role related (i.e., administrator or teacher) and they were not explicitly considered in this study.

**Significance of the Research**

**Significance at a Micro Level**

At a micro level the study offers potential significance to several levels of stakeholders including students, teachers, staff, administration and community. The
significance of the study is increased self awareness of the teachers regarding the quality of their school lives in relation to their own roles. Understanding teachers as ‘carers’ may empower reflection and choice in their lives (Clandinin, 1986; Schon, 1983).

For leadership there are also understandings of significance. Feelings of guilt and the need to avoid fragmentation because of managerial concerns for curriculum, coupled with organizational desire for meeting needs through provision of support, presents other pressures for leadership. The feelings and desires are important for leaders, because they suggest leadership beliefs and values (i.e., whether both are equally important, and why or why not). Through sharing understandings and working to diminish pressures leaders potentially effect positive change in school.

Significance at a Macro Level

Collectively a description of the lives of the participants may inform stakeholders as to perceptions of life in school, and the effects of various stakeholder groups on teachers’ lives. Individual perceptions and collective action to increase voice and choice may be used to transform school culture. Information of this kind potentially informs greater society of the multiplicity of teacher’s roles in schools.

Theoretical and Practical Significance

This study has theoretical significance because it provides insights into a virtually unexplored area: an inquiry into school life as experienced by elementary school teachers. Thus, it adds to the current body of teacher education literature.

This description has practical significance for stakeholders who may benefit from a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive others’ expectations for their roles and their lives in school. The research findings may offer direction to stakeholders in terms of
encouraging situations that allow quality living to take place. Teachers may in turn benefit from an environment that is conducive to different awareness of quality in life.

*Ethical Significance*

Who cares for the carer? This is a question of ethical significance for all who are involved in education. Is it the ATA, Alberta Learning, local school boards, teachers themselves, or others who care for teachers? All appear to play some part, but no one claims ownership for the teachers’ feelings of balance in their lives (nor am I suggesting they should). If teachers believe and strategically focus on living with a cultural rite to care, without self monitoring the effects, this question is significant.

This research suggested possible effects on the lives of those teachers whose primary approach is one of care. There are networks of individuals and/or groups to provide some care for teachers (as people who express the need to be cared-for within recognized and reciprocal relationships of ‘circles and chains of care’). Teachers in public schools are affiliated with the ATA through bonds forged from accreditation to legal service. Such networks provide sophisticated chains of care for the carer, if the teacher is available to be cared-for in these ways. The teachers spoke of informal support from friends and families whose networks also provided support for those who were ‘available to be cared-for’. All people wanted to feel supported in their lives in school.

Supportive relationships varied, but were prerequisite to decision making. Empowered through relationships individuals chose change for their personal lives and by implication to others in their relationships. A predisposition to care implies that on occasion teachers also wanted to be cared-for. The dynamic of being a carer is integral to relationships.
The ripple effect of caring is significant beyond teacher life to all aspects of society. It implies parallel philosophic concerns about the core beliefs and values of society regarding children, how they become adults, and expectations of them in a democracy. The values of the status quo are portrayed through curriculum for schools. Within an ethic 'to care' there are implications for all aspects of education (i.e., curricular content and process, educational governance, and teacher education).

Suggestions for Future Research

The understandings portrayed in this research provide a valuable first step for thinking about teachers’ lives in general. Future studies may qualify and/or quantify the research and further enrich societal understanding.

*To Explore Current Research Interpretations*

As a next step in understanding teacher life in school, follow-up research might examine why teachers’ lives look the way they do. Why are teachers struggling (or why not) to bring a sense of harmony to their lives? Why is reflective practice encouraged (or not) in schools? How do stakeholders make sure there is time for reflection? Research that asks these types of questions could help to expand the findings in the current study.

*To Explore Predictability of the Emergent Theory*

Future studies could purposefully explore the predictability of the emergent theory to validate the current interpretations. Theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1999, p. 204) of other elementary populations to consider might include: only female or male teachers, and the voices of other stakeholders. Likewise, other elementary school contexts might include: larger/smaller populations of teachers and schools in areas of greater/lesser socio economic diversity. Later studies of junior high and secondary
schools, charter and private schools, could also contribute much needed information to a society in which its schools and its teachers are challenged to fulfill basic roles and the relative roles expected to satisfy the status quo. As mentioned earlier, teachers’ lives in elementary schools in Canada/Alberta is an area of study that deserves academic attention but the literature available is limited.

*To Explore Challenges in Fulfilling the Roles of a Teacher/s*

At a time when teachers’ roles are being questioned further research could specifically examine teachers’ challenges to fulfill their basic roles. A case study approach might focus on the relative expectations to better understand how and why teachers make the choices to engage in relative work.

One of the challenges the teachers in this study described was an inability to find time to reflect in meaningful ways. Other researchers might look at the impact of teachers’ reflective practices on the processing of choicepoints regarding life in school. This, too, may be useful information for educational leaders to use in consideration of personal professional practice. Who cares for the carer? This may provide a focus for the aspects of teachers’ lives that remain unclear.

*To Explore Transformational Leadership*

National and international comparisons of teachers’ lives could enhance and expand the present understandings. A focus on school leadership and how teachers live their lives in school would be of interest to a growing international community of educators (Day, 2000; Hiebert & Ellison, in press).

Research to examine the lives of school leaders as carers could continue to clarify, elaborate, and bring greater credibility to a Choicepoint Theory in the process of
transforming school culture. Part of the process, or perhaps a study of its own, would be to better understand choicepoints in promoting self care with teachers.

To Explore Current Trends in Teaching

Through the dual lens of choicepoints and care, educators are encouraged to engage in research pertaining to current trends such as: high burn out rates amongst teachers, short term commitment of new teachers, the perception of lack of resilience in the profession today, the lives of part time teachers, and understandings of critical mass within a staff. Pursuit of qualities in teachers’ lives may be pertinent to those in other caring professions (i.e., nursing), and/or society in general.

To Explore Gender Issues

There could be studies from the perspective of transformational leadership that would be of interest to educators who are interested in gender issues. For example, researchers could explore Choicepoints within the leadership context of a primarily female profession that is governed by primarily traditional male policy. This could also be of interest to educators who are interested in the under-representation of male teachers in elementary classrooms. Finally, future researchers might also study school leadership and the gap between societal expectations and teacher quality of life focusing specifically on gender issues.

Concluding Thoughts

How teachers considered stakeholder expectations and desire for quality in life was provided by: (a) the representations of artifacts on teachers’ desks that illustrated teachers focused strategically to manage time/money and organize people, (b) time as a tool to examine teachers’ roles that suggested strategies for changes that were possible
and others that were inevitable, and (c) people and their relationships were organized in
order to consider and care for others. To further describe teachers’ considerations, I
suggested an emergent theory based upon choicepoints in teachers’ lives, the strategies
used, and the possible effects of the strategies on teachers’ lives. The complexities of
teachers’ lives, although seldom studied in this way, are significant because of their
societal mandate to teach children with the integrity of both professional and absentee
parent. From the participant perspective there was a crisis in education.

I think the greatest challenge today for all of us is to find the balance of doing
what we claim to do, when it is impossible! That is, we claim to educate all
children and be available to educate all children. This is not possible. There is a
fundamental gap between what we’re able to do, and what we know we ought to
do, or know we could do, … or sure want to try (Karen, Interview, 24.01.04).

Beyond the futility expressed in the above quotation is the strength of the principal as a
leader of culture who in recognition of the gap in teachers’ lives also identifies the
challenge. The teachers in this study were expected by the researcher to explain the gap
between how they saw their lives, how they aspired to live, and further, to understand the
responsibility for their involvement in transformational change. My research situated
responsibility for this gap within the context of teachers’ lives in school. However, the
astute challenge in Karen’s quotation is for all who ‘ought to care’ for the education of
students as future adults and contributing citizens to accept responsibility for leadership
in bringing positive educational change to our schools.

In June of 2004 the teachers in the largest school systems in the province were
once again positioning themselves to strike to raise awareness of the continuing
degradation of public school life. The macro educational tensions that led to the initiation
of this research in the year 2000 have not diminished.
References


Covey, S., Merrill, A., & Merrill, R. (1994). *First things first: to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy*. Toronto, ON: Simon & Schuster.


Hiebert, M. & Ellison, L. (2004). *The lives of British headteachers in schools*. (Research in progress on behalf of the University of Nottingham, UK: NCSL.)


Appendix A. Summaries of Four Regulatory Documents
Appendix A

Summaries of Four Regulatory Documents

The first document, *The Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provisions of Basic Education in Alberta* (Province of Alberta, 1997, Ministerial Order #016/97) is foundational to teachers’ roles. It begins with: (a) "Quality teaching occurs when the teacher’s ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher’s decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply, result in optimum learning by students.” (b) “All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) throughout their careers…” The document applies to teacher certification, professional development, supervision, and evaluation, each of which are supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills, and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers. As a legal document the TQS provides a framework for society to relate to the work of teachers in Alberta’s schools. It states what a teacher should know to insure students achieve optimum learning. A summary from *The Teaching Quality Standard, Ministerial Order #016/97* is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge/Skills/Attributes Related to Interim Certification</th>
<th>Knowledge/Skills/Attributes Related to Permanent Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze and respond to many contextual variables at once</td>
<td>Apply pedagogical K/S/A based on their ongoing analysis of contextual variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the different role expectations, their responsibilities and accountabilities within the structure of Alberta Learning</td>
<td>Understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand Alberta program guides germane to their areas of specialization</td>
<td>Understand the subject disciplines they teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete courses and understand the subject disciplines they teach</td>
<td>Know there are many approaches to teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand how to identify and respond to individual learning styles</td>
<td>Engage in a range of planning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand how to meet students’ needs for security and to engage students using positive management</td>
<td>Create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the importance of respecting students’ human dignity</td>
<td>Translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand there are many approaches to teaching and learning</td>
<td>Apply a variety of technologies to meet students’ learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand and know how to use teaching technologies to engage student learning</td>
<td>Gather and use information about students’ learning needs and progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the purposes of student assessment, and how to develop/use/analyze assessment measures</td>
<td>Establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to engage parents in teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td>Are career-long learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student learning is enhanced through the use of home and community resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute independently and collegially to the quality of their school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the importance of career-long learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the importance of having a vision to guide their actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand they are to achieve the TQS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes
A second document, *The Declaration of Rights Responsibilities and Liabilities* (ATA, 2002), from the Constitution of The Alberta Teachers’ Association helps to clarify, or put the KSAs into a practical context that reveals the complexity of the role/s of a teacher. The Declaration relates to teachers’ contracts, teaching duties, teacher liability, assault, students with special needs and medical requirements, assessment of students, authority and role of administrators, and professional relations (ATA, 2002). (See Figure 2 for an outline of the document.) The specific duties of teachers include conducting of classes and the preparing of lessons; requisitioning of audio-visual material and other materials and equipment; evaluating and reporting student progress; and maintaining classroom order in promoting a healthy learning climate (Anderson & Piran, 1999). Teachers are also expected to supervise students, assist to a reasonable extent with extracurricular programs agreed to by the staff, cooperate with other teachers in the best interests of students, and generally, to act as an enthusiastic member of the school’s educational team. Included in the term are other possible teaching duties, such as functional specialist assignments as administrator, teacher librarian, counselor, and supervisor (ATA, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Duties</th>
<th>Teacher Liability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties in Classroom Instruction</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Principle of in loco parentis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>The Criminal Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Students</td>
<td>Negligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties as a Staff Member:</strong></td>
<td>Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records and reports</td>
<td>Student Injury or Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meetings</td>
<td>Transporting Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocurricular activities</td>
<td>Child Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Corporal Punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School discipline</td>
<td>Field Trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noncertificated Personnel</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assessment of Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Responsibilities</td>
<td>Responsibility for evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Funds</strong></td>
<td>Teacher, principal, superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Purchases</td>
<td>Responsibility of Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours of Work</strong></td>
<td>Teacher &amp; school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Relations</strong></td>
<td>School board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assault</strong></td>
<td>Education minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students with Special Needs &amp; Medical requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Authority and Role of Administrators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming</td>
<td>Hierarchy of a School System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher position</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other administrative personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Selected List of Teachers' Rights, Responsibilities, and Liabilities
The Teachers’ Code of Professional Conduct, in the Member’s Handbook (ATA, 2002), a third document, stipulates minimum standards of professional conduct of teachers, but it is not an exhaustive list of such standards. Members of the Alberta Teachers’ Association who violate the standards of the profession, including the provision of the code may be subject to a charge of unprofessional conduct under the bylaws of the Association (ATA, 2002). The standards of conduct as directed toward teacher’s relationships with pupils, school authorities, colleagues, and the profession, are summarized in Figure 3. A number of the tensions related to moral ethical dilemmas of teachers will be discussed later in the paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In relation to pupils</th>
<th>In relation to school authorities</th>
<th>In relation to colleagues</th>
<th>In relation to the profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protests assignment of inappropriate duties</td>
<td>Doesn’t undermine confidence in colleagues</td>
<td>Acts with honor and dignity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for students progress and may not delegate these responsibilities</td>
<td>Fulfills contractual obligations</td>
<td>Criticizes colleagues Appropriately &amp; in confidence</td>
<td>Acts in positive professional ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides notice of employment termination</td>
<td>Provides good faith professional reports after copying to reported teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats pupils with respect regardless of circumstances</td>
<td>Adheres to agreements negotiated on their behalf by the ATA</td>
<td>Does not try to have another teacher dismissed (due to animosity or for personal advantage)</td>
<td>Represents the Association as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not divulge confidential information</td>
<td>Duty is to protest through appropriate channels, failure administrator assumes authority</td>
<td>Accepts that service is a professional responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not accept pay for tutoring their students</td>
<td>Administrators provide opportunity to express opinions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May not take advantage of position to profit from sales to or for their students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standards Guiding the Relationships of Teachers

A fourth document was designed for teachers to monitor their own growth as teachers. Mandated by Alberta Learning and implemented as part of the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation, Policy 4003 of the Calgary Board of Education (1999), it specifies that all teachers and principals are responsible for writing an annual Teacher Professional Growth Plan (TPGP). Each person’s plan is unique, based upon self-assessment, guided by the Teaching Quality Standard, and informed by local school board policy. It includes goals/objectives, action plans/strategies, assistance/support, timelines, and descriptors of completion/indicators of success. The plan is confidential, but a teacher must review the contents with the principal or a review body, and later meet
to discuss the successes and challenges in the implementation of the TPGP. When the plans were initially implemented, there were concerns expressed about privacy and the principal using the information for evaluative purposes. However, the discussions are to comply with the Teachers’ Professional Code of Conduct and the roles of the teacher and the principal in completing the TPGP are clearly outlined in school board policy. A teacher or principal who does not comply with the policy to complete the TPGP may be subject to disciplinary action (CBE, 1999, p.23).
Appendix B. Roles That Teachers Play
Appendix B

Roles That Teachers Play

Some of the Piddocke et al. (1997) findings are listed below:

- A breach of norms meant the character of a professional could become an issue for society. Reciprocally, societal pressure could become an issue to the professional.
- Everyone seemed to have a slightly different opinion about what teachers did (but, as mentioned earlier insight into what Alberta’s teachers should did has been documented).
- Standards of conduct applied to school life, yet many teachers felt that their “work” was never done. This may be because in school teacher's behaviors were closely scrutinized and there was carry over to out-of-school activities, giving the impression that work happened 24 hours a day.
- The teacher was expected to be a person whose character justified trust by parents and school authorities.
- The teacher was expected to exemplify a morality that justified society’s judgment of being fit to instruct the young. Typically the teacher's behavior out of school was relevant to these expectations.
- Situation specific parameters of a teacher’s work were not always clear, but teachers, in carrying out the purpose of their institutions were guided by behavioral norms and pressure to conform. The norms were the expectations, rules, and prescriptions about what must be done or ought to be done. What actually happened was viewed as the teacher’s behavior.
- Norms that were considered fundamental to the roles of teachers were: those tied to teacher-student relationships, those tied to the role of teacher as an employee, and those tied to the professional aspect of the teacher's role.
- There were also unidentified roles that were not obvious as the three major categories.

All of the categories are dynamic and hypothetically other roles can evolve where/when there is overlap (Piddocke et al., 1997). To illustrate, a teacher joins a school library committee, the role spirals into others when the teacher is asked to do fund-raising to buy new books, which in turn necessitates liaising with the parent counsel and student leadership groups.
Appendix C. Permission to Conduct Research
CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW

This is to certify that the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary has examined the following research proposal and found the proposed research involving human subjects to be in accordance with University of Calgary Guidelines and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Using Human Subjects. This form and accompanying letter constitute the Certification of Institutional Ethics Review.

Applicant(s): Marilyn Hiebert
Department/Faculty: Graduate Division of Educational Research
Project Title: Teachers' Lives in Schools

Sponsor (if applicable):

Restrictions:

This Certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the project and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modifications to the authorized protocol must be submitted to the Chair, Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for approval.
3. A progress report must be submitted 12 months from the date of this Certification, and should provide the expected completion date for the project.
4. Written notification must be sent to the Board when the project is complete or terminated.

Chair
Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board

Date: 18 July 2002

Distribution: (1) Applicant, (2) Supervisor (if applicable), (3) Chair, Department/Faculty Research Ethics Committee, (4) Sponsor, (5) Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (6) Research Services
Appendix D. Consent Forms
Appendix D

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Teachers' Lives in School

Investigator: Marilyn Hiebert  Ph.D. Candidate GDER, University of Calgary

Funding Agency: N/A

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study will explore how teachers and administrators see their lives in school, as described through their roles and their perceptions of their quality of life. Observations and interviews, along with documents such as, daily and/or long range plans, will be used to explore how teachers see their roles, their preferred roles, and other peoples’ expectations of them.

Two or three rounds of data collection are anticipated, occurring over a maximum span of nine months. The sequence of events is to be repeated during the fall, the winter and possibly in the spring. Each round of data collection will involve three steps. First there will be a semi-structured individual interview with the researcher that will last for approximately forty-five minutes, before or after school, arranged at a mutually agreed upon time. This initial interview will help to establish a context for the observations that follow. Second, during each round the participants will be asked for permission to observe them teaching for approximately one hour. The observation will focus on teaching roles in teaching episodes/events. No data will be collected about students. Third, the observation will be followed with a semi-structured informal interview lasting about thirty minutes. Documents and artifacts (such as lesson plans or school improvement plans) will be requested to provide another dimension to the data.

Anonymity will be assured on all information collected. Field notes will be written while observing the teaching. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. All participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym. Individual participants will be provided with copies of the researcher’s findings following each round of data collection. Their reactions will be invited to verify the researcher’s interpretations. At the conclusion of the study the findings will be made available to the participants in private meetings. During that time the researcher will respond to any questions and engage the participants in a discussion regarding the practical uses of the findings. The information that is collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Calgary and destroyed five years following the completion of the study. The investigator
will be available to answer any questions during the course of the study and all results will be made available to the participants at the conclusion of the study.

Interpretations and findings from this study will be used for my doctoral dissertation and may also be presented at scholarly conferences and in academic journals. A complete report of all findings will be made available to the school.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time without fear of repercussion or penalty of any kind.

You have been provided with two copies of this consent form. If you are interested in becoming a participant, please complete both copies of the form, keep one copy for your personal records, and place one completed form in the Research Box in the main office.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact me, Marilyn Hiebert, at 247-2179. Or, you may contact my research supervisor, Dr. Christine Gordon, at 220-6164.

If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may contact the Research Service Office 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.


Participant's Signature

Date

Investigator / Witness

Date
ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: Teachers' Lives in School

Investigator: Marilyn Hiebert Ph.D. Candidate GDER, University of Calgary

Funding Agency: N/A

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This study will explore how teachers and administrators see their lives in school, as described through their roles and their perceptions of their quality of life. Observations and interviews, along with documents (i.e., meeting agendas, school improvement plans), will be used to explore how administrators see their roles, their preferred roles, and other peoples' expectations of them.

Two or three rounds of data collection are anticipated, occurring over a maximum span of nine months. The sequence of events is to be repeated during the fall, the winter, and possibly in the spring. Each round of data collection will involve three steps. First there will be an individual semi-structured interview with the researcher that will last for approximately forty-five minutes, before or after school, arranged at a mutually agreed upon time. This initial interview will help to establish a context for the observations that follow. Second, during each round the participants will be asked for permission to observe their role/s in the event of a staff meeting. The observations will last for approximately one hour. Third, the observation will be followed by a semi-structured informal interview lasting about thirty minutes. No data will be collected on fellow teachers or other administrators during the staff meeting. Documents and artifacts (i.e., a staff meeting agenda, school improvement plan) will be requested to provide another dimension to the data.

Anonymity will be assured on all information collected. Field notes will be written while observing the staff meeting. Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. All participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym. Individual participants will be provided with copies of the researcher's findings following each round of data collection. Their reactions will be invited to verify the researcher's interpretations. At the conclusion of the study the findings will be made available to the participants in private meetings. During that time the researcher will respond to any questions and engage the participants in a discussion regarding the practical uses of the findings. The information that is collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Calgary destroyed five years following the completion of the study. The investigator will be available to answer any questions during the course of the study and all results will be made available to the participants at the conclusion of the study.

Interpretations and findings from this study will be used for my doctoral dissertation and may also be presented at scholarly conferences and in academic journals.
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time without fear of repercussion or penalty of any kind.

You have been provided with two copies of this consent form. If you are interested in becoming a participant, please complete both copies of the form, keep one copy for your personal records, and place one completed form in a Research Box in the main office.

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If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may contact the Research Service Office 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.

Participant's Signature  Date

Investigator / Witness  Date
Appendix E. Interview Templates
Appendix E

Question Template: Semi-Structured Interview I

Use of template

- The interview will be conducted within the same week as the class/staff meeting observation, and Semi-Structured Interview II.
- The template is to be used to guide in-depth interviews with individual participants.
- It is to be used as a basis for the interviews during each round of data gathering.

The Template

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Time: (Estimate forty-five minutes)

Place: (Recommend a quiet room in the school where we will not be distracted)

Equipment: (Audio tape recorder to tape record the interview for which prior consent will be required.)

Introduction and brief description of the project. Thank you for volunteering to work with me this year. I appreciate your willingness to share your ideas with me. I will be tape recording our conversation and if you select a pseudonym I will use that name in our work together.

There have been many changes in our world during the last decade. That has meant changes in society and as a result in the education system. I am interested in better understanding how teachers and school administrators accommodate/attend to/consider societal and stakeholder expectations, as well as, their own desire for quality in their work lives. For me a key question is, How do teachers see their lives in school? Hence, how do you experience your life in school? Most of my questions to guide our conversation will be about the roles that you play in the school.

Questions

1. What do you see as your role/s in school?
   - What other role/s do you assume responsibility for doing?
   - Why do you do these things?

2. What do you see as the main challenge/s in your role/s?
   - What enablers are there for you in performing your role/s?
   - What barriers are there for you in performing your role/s?

3. What are your preferred role/s?
   - What do you like best about performing your roles?
   - What do you like the least about performing your roles?

4. What other roles are you expected to perform in school?
   - Are you aware of other expectations that people have of you at school? (For example, students, parents, staff, administration, family, friends)
   - How do you live with other people’s expectations for you at school? (What do you do?)

5. When I say QoL what are the first ten words that come to your mind?
   - What comes to mind when I say QoL in school?
   - What comes to mind when I say QoL at home?
Question Template: Semi-Structured Interview II to Debrief Class/Meeting Observations

Use of template
- The interview will be conducted on the same day as the classroom observation and is designed as a debriefing interview (following either a class meeting, for the teachers, or the staff meeting for the principal). The numbered questions are primary and will the conversation, and the secondary questions may or may not be necessary to enhance the responses.
- The template is to be used to guide the debriefing with individual participants.
- It is to be used as a basis for the interviews during each round of data gathering.

The Template

Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

Time: (Estimate one hour observations. The classroom observations will ideally take place in the morning, and the debriefing for about 30 minutes at noon or after school the same day. Staff meeting observations will be for approximately one hour and the debriefing interviews will be done as soon after the meeting as can be conveniently scheduled for participants.)

Place: (Recommend a quiet room in the school where we will not be distracted)

Equipment: (Tape recorder to tape the interview for which prior consent will be required.)

Introduction and brief description of the project: Thank you for volunteering for the study, I appreciate your willingness to share your ideas and your work with me. The purpose for meeting is to talk about the class/meeting that I observed (as mentioned in the consent form). I would like to take notes and tape record the interview. I'd like to begin by asking you to talk about the class generally. Please outline what you did and what happened during the class.

Questions
1. What did you see as your role/s in this specific class/meeting?
   - What other role/s did you assume responsibility for doing? Why did you do these things?
   - How do you feel about this role? (Select from response.)
2. What did you see as the main challenge/s in your role/s? (Pertaining to class/meeting)
   - What helps or enables you to perform these role/s?
   - What makes it difficult or even impossible to perform these role/s?
3. What were your preferred role/s? (Pertaining to class/meeting)
   - What did you like best about performing your roles?
   - What did you like the least about performing your roles?
4. What other roles were you expected to perform in your classroom/school?
   - Were you aware of expectations that other people had of you regarding your classroom/school? (Students, assistants, parents, staff, administration, system, family, friends, me).
   - If there were other perceived expectations, how did you live with them? (What did you do?)
   - How did you feel about this? (Select from response)
Appendix F. Teachers Talk About Their Teaching Backgrounds
Appendix F

Teachers Talk About Their Teaching Backgrounds

The following is a summary of the background information provided by each participant at the first interview.

Beatrice (BE). Teaching is my second career. My first career, I have a business degree and I worked in the oil industry for twenty years, I guess. And I’ve only been teaching – this is my eighth year teaching, so I went back to university and just took the education degree. I guess it would have been ’89, and then just did it part-time. I was still working with an oil company as well, doing project work. So I was kind of doing both. Then once I got my degree I thought, “Well, I’ll apply for a job,” and I got it right away, so I thought, “I guess this is what I’m going to be doing,” but I still loved what I was doing in the business world. So, yeah, I have been teaching eight years. Two years of those we job shared. Sally and I, that are teaching together now, I did a job share with her and this is my fifth school that I’ve been in and I’ve taught everything from K-6 as well. Mostly – every school I have been in has been multi-age like this one. This is my first school in the north. They’ve all been in the south. And it was my choice. I thought I needed to work in a school where there were more high needs children, so I chose to go to high needs schools. I loved them! But, I thought, “I need to live with kids that are really needy,” so I got my experience there. I learned how to do IPPs, I’ll tell you! Then from there we went – my team partner and I, we job-shared, we went to another school. And then we came here as a job-share as well. Then last year we had the opportunity – two years ago we had the opportunity to go full-time. Right now that’s what we’re doing, we’re doing some team-teaching. I did not like being on my own teaching. I always second guessed myself and thought – you just need that stimulation from somebody else. It’s wonderful here, too, because you get team-teaching plus you work in teams. So we have our team meetings and it’s the best. It’s the best of all the worlds to be able to work with other people rather than being isolated in your own little grade and not to be able to work with other people. Here my number one role is to teach my grade threes and fours. That’s my number one. I have lots of other jobs in the school, but that’s my priority, is those children.

Julia (JL). I’ve been teaching for, probably, since ’78 so that’s a few years. I started off teaching in a small town in central Alberta and then we moved to the city. I taught in high needs for about nine years, grade two, I think it was, and science specialist. I went from there to the northwest as a resource teacher and so I taught grade five/six and did resource and then just did resource. And then I’ve been here for four years, maybe five with one/twos. I love my science specialty. I really loved that. That was my favorite. Resource was a fantastic experience. The best part was that -- the learning that happened to me because I saw all these different classrooms and how people approached it. So it wasn’t that I got as much time teaching as I would have maybe of liked, but it was a great learning experience. What was difficult about that job was teaching teachers. That’s not maybe my best thing. Well, there are nuances and it’s a bit tricky in how you present something without hurting somebody’s feelings and making them feel inadequate. And you feel like you’re on this plateau and so, who am I to say that this is how it should be done, or this is how it even could be done. Because – and, you know,
you might offend somebody else. So, I found that difficult. I am .8 grade 1 and 2 right now and I do everything but not music, that’s our prep, and my job share does the gym, the health and the social studies. And the rest is mine. So basically, in the morning, it’s language arts/math, with me. Every day. And then, I also do all the science. Oh, I love part time. Even -- I even have these two afternoons off. I have three kids and I’m a single mom, so – and my kids are really involved in sports so you have a lot of driving. After school it’s, you know, take this person here, pick that person up there, and for me to coordinate all that and have a bit of sanity, I can’t do it full-time. I can’t – I really work hard at school and I also work really hard at home and it’s just a killer! Somebody said to me, “Don’t complain because your kids aren’t at the mall and they are focusing.” A lot of their friends come – have the same interests and they’re all really grounded kids. So, I thought, “Yeah, for the amount of time I spend on the road,” and I grumble about that, “it does have pay offs.” It’s an investment of money and time, right?

June (JN). I started off as secondary art person. I did all my training in high school and that’s where I wanted to stay. What got me out of doing that was then they had that compensatory program. I don’t know if you remember that. I think it started – I’m just trying to think now, in 1982, that’s when I went into elementary. So they used me as – well, it was called the compensatory program, but kind of like a consultant. So I would meet with all the teachers at different times depending on their team meetings and we would try and integrate the art and the language arts so that it would support each other. And that was for three years, and it was really good. So I would assign myself to whatever group that I was working with for that couple of months, or whatever. So we tried it like that one year. One year, actually maybe the first year, I took regular art classes, like, I took, but not as release time. As a teaching time for the teachers so that they could learn how to teach art. And the second year I floated and then – I can’t remember what I did the third year, it was so long ago. But basically as a consultant and then I would go in and do some of the teaching (in one school). So that’s how I got to elementary. Yeah, it was very good. So that was three years there and then I had time off because then I – I’m trying to think. No, the program ended and that was when I went into regular class. But I also knew I would be off the next year because I was taking a maternity leave. So then I stayed in elementary and then I went off and on to different schools part-time. Sometimes art, sometimes regular class, either grade four or five, and then I ended up in another school part-time. I was there for eight years. When I was there with you, was that at the beginning then, probably. Sometimes I was full-time art and sometimes there I was part-time, .4, grade four or five and then art the rest of the time. I always taught some art there. I came from there to the northeast. That’s when I stopped doing art. I thought I needed a break from it. So I went there. I was there two years, and then I came here. And it’s -- I’m doing five/six here and – this is my third year here. At the second last school I did looping. I did grade three one year, grade four the next and I like the continuity. Here we team-teach, we plan together but we don’t teach together, because our rooms aren’t adjoining, we don’t do any of the teaching together. Actually, that’s not true. We do the art together, the instruction, and we do some other instruction in some other areas some of the time, but we totally plan together. Everything.

Carole (CA). One of the things that makes me unique at this school and in the system is this role that I’ve taken with the ATA. And I’m finding more and more that it
is coloring a lot of who I am in terms of being a teacher advocate and learning about an educator's life beyond the elementary classroom. I'm getting insights into substitute teachers and into admin and into high school and into college that I wouldn't have had otherwise. So I am getting more of a global view of what an education system can be about. And that can be good and bad and that's going to play itself out. I'm glad I'm doing it and I'm glad I'm learning it and I think I'm doing well and I've gotten tremendous feedback that is extremely gratifying. Especially when there are still times "Oh, if you guys only knew what bad shape you're going to be in because I'm in charge of this." I've been doing this for almost a year in one of the more complicated times. So, I mean, my learning curve has been unbelievable. I've had an amazing support group, an amazing support group. How long have I taught? Now, I was an intern so I'm always thinking, "Do I count that, or don't I?" I'm going to say sixteen years. I started in a small town community school. I worked there for a couple of years. Was unemployed, then, I worked in a, well, we'll call it a middle school grade six to nine in a north/central community. I taught French – I was grade six and seven. Everyone else taught them everything else because I was teaching all in French. It was truly, truly bizarre. But it was fun! Except those grade nine boys are just huge! Scared the bejeepers out of me. And then I came to this city in '89, took a huge chance and I've been here ever since. Needless to say, the Board in 1989 was a huge shock and a very lovely shock because of what we had. So, I have some perspective on what's been lost in this system. Because I was there before it was lost. The loan pools, and the specialists and oh, my word, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I think inclusion is a fine thing, in theory, but all the things that I've done with it as a grad student and living it as an educator, no one who is intimate with it has ever done it with integrity, as far as I'm concerned because the supports aren't there and you can't include special needs in the classroom without appropriate supports. You do tremendous disservices to everybody in that process, if you don't do it properly. Including the severely normal, the profoundly average children that you just don't have time for.

Karen (K). I've got 29 years in the school system. This is my 29th year. I've got rural and urban experience. I began rural. I began at a time when the county I was in had a policy that beginning teachers in elementary only worked with grade two or grade five and had a maximum of fifteen students in their first year of teaching. And then the next year, the Piper came. But your first year was a year to kind of consolidate and get a sense of who you were. Then, I have had a special education background, and my teaching experience has been predominately elementary although I've taught in a four to nine school and a one to twelve school, and the rest of the years have been the traditional K-6. I've taught multi-age classrooms, did the first inclusive classroom in this system, in terms of a full-scale inclusion of a prep class in with our pod of two. I was a consultant, social studies team in the 80s when we had thirteen of us, and we downsized and I was the first one to be the system elementary consultant for social studies. So, it went from thirteen of us to one during my tenure. I was seconded to Alberta Learning for a year for curriculum service. Did my graduate studies in the politicization of education in Alberta, and I've authored several books for students that were placed in the schools. I had assistant principal-ships at two school and principal-ships of four. In 1991 I got my Masters. Just before the big cuts hit. Well, actually, they were starting, because when I was – in the mid 80s, that first wave of cuts hit us when our superintendent brought the whole
department in and put us in the big room and told us half of us would be gone in the next year. The cuts were so, huge. I think in a successful school the principal’s role -- probably the most important part of my job, from my perspective, is staffing and finding those people who see children at the forefront of their work.

Brent (BR). I’ve only taught for this System – I started in the late ‘80s and so I had a one-year experience where I worked with a team of teachers in a school and learned the culture, learned the ebb and flow of a year, all of those sorts of things, which was probably the richest sort of opportunity of my life. And set me up well. That helps contextualize. I spent a time as a physical education specialist, classroom teacher, three/four, five/six. Stayed at a school for about six years then ended up on my, sort of, major migration but because of a drop in populations, was in a school for a year. Had an opportunity to go to a new school to open it. So I had an opportunity to teach seven, eight and nine, integrated program, modified calendar, track, that kind of stuff. And then eventually becoming a learning leader that was administrative, counseling, guidance, coordinator position for one of the tracks. Then I left to just take the position of curriculum leader at an elementary school. Another school as an assistant principal, for my first experience and then I left and I’ve been here ever since.

I finished my Masters in the late ‘80s as well and my area was perspectives of principals and teachers of principals of change agents. It was very instrumental in my current path. I see my primary role as meeting the needs of, really, parents, staff and students and probably in that order, although I don’t like the order. It seems that those are the tugs in my life. My role is resource to those groups and supporter of those groups. Part of my role here is also, kind of, a personal interest, but with technology it also becomes the resource or the lead teacher with that and the responsibilities and trappings that go with that as well. I have assigned time that I provide prep to the two students, the grade three/fours, all of those students. I also provide prep time through phys. ed. and story for kindergarten and I am engaged with, it will be all of the teachers, over the course of the year through their AISI projects. Projects that they, sort of, have an interest in for their professional development. I’m the resource coordinator and that kind of thing.

Colleen (CO). I started out as a generalist. I taught out in a small city just east of here for five years as a generalist. Then I decided to come into the city, so then I worked at a southeast school for seven years. I moved into the resource room position, looking more at behavior, my last year there. I don’t have a lot of special – I don’t have any special education training other than what I picked up after university. But I have reading, and early reading intervention is something that I’ve been interested in so I took some courses. And then, from there, I moved to another school where I did half – I taught grade three half days and I did resource half days, and that was working with a lot of special needs kids who needed help, but in behavior. After I had been on a maternity leave for three years, I returned to this school as resource teacher. I’m job sharing. I’m .6, and my job share partner is .4. I’ve picked up the resource, I’m doing the three/four resource at the school and two grade one/two classrooms. My job share has picked up all the ESL. She and I taught together before so we have a history together. I think once you’ve teamed it’s hard to go back. I think for your own sanity, because it’s the way to save yourself. Right now I work with the grade three/fours. I do the school resource group meetings whenever they come up. I probably have at least one a week, out of the
three days that I work. I also organize any outside agencies that are needed to be a part of a student’s programming. I assist teachers with IPP. I do educational assessments. I do small group instructions, mostly with the kids with learning disabilities, specifically looking at reading/writing and phonics. I would say I teach – last year I didn’t teach at all. I was totally tied up with – I worked more with the files. I would say, this year, I am trying to do half and half. No. I wouldn’t say half. I’d say .6 is meetings. I’d say .4 is in class with the students working with small groups.
Appendix G. Letter Requesting Closure
Appendix G

Letter Requesting Closure

June 11, 2003

Dear ____________

I am writing to ask you if you would be able to meet with me to review my preliminary research findings, and so that I can say thank you to you for working with me on the project (It need not take more than 30-40 minutes). The school year is rapidly coming to an end, and I know how busy it is. Hopefully, you will still have a little time to fit a meeting into your schedule.

As I promised earlier this winter, I want to provide you the opportunity to talk about your contributions to my research study and to verify the accuracy of my interpretations. My goal is to complete my thesis this summer so that I can defend it in the fall. Your feedback will strengthen my work.

My time for the next few weeks is flexible and any meeting will be at your convenience. Please let me know if and when we can meet. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Hiebert
Appendix H. Desk Photographs
Appendix H

Desk Photographs